

Every Flight (Begins With A Fall)

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Language:	English
Series:	Part 1 of Crowinnit
Collections:	Fics in which Tommyinnit gets turned into an animal for therapy reasons , my aetwt addiction , Crow Cult's DSMP Favorites , lee's favorite fics that you should definitely read as well :) , Dream SMP fics that butter my bread , techno & phil (my favorites) , Bookshelf , Completed works that I would most likely come back to when feeling nostalgic , SBI Fics for the soul , Favorite fanfics that I already finished , wow i really am reading mc fanfiction 🥰🥰 , phoenix's mcyt fics <3 , Found family to make me feel something , Vespers collection of fics that makes their brain go brrr , Angsty/Fluffy MCYT works , fern's benchtrio/sbi angst fics to cry about at 4:13am , my favourite block boys that make me enjoy living , Interesting stories by wonderful people 💖😊 , Dsmpt fics , Neats fave c!tommy centric fics , DSMP Fics I adore - Mainly about Tommy because that boy is my - traumatized - comfort character 😊 , Banger MCYT Fics that Nearly Caused Me To Fail University , Eldest-Ostrich , Cross' Collection of DSMP/SBI fics (finished) , canon divergence , so what im a tommyminnit kin , Animal Transformations , Cute MCYT , Mcyt(mostly SBI) fics that I adore , Purrsonal

[Picks](#), [The best MCYT fics you've ever read](#), [great reads](#), [DSMP Fics in my Ultimate Quotebook](#), [things i would fail classes for \(and have\)](#), [HOLY SHIT GREAT SBI FICS OGH MY GOD NOT ONLY SBI JUST GREAT FICS MCYT](#), [fanfic for the soul <3](#), [mcyt fanfic library <3](#), [Fics I enjoy](#), [:D](#), [hello yes i can't stop thinking about these works](#), [\(found\) family fics because i crave emotional affection](#), [Best Hurt/Comfort SBI Fics](#), [Stalker's Amongst Stalker's](#), [*consumes the angst*](#), [Dream SMP fics that make my heart stop](#), [Tommy turns into an animal fics my beloved](#), [Pawsitively Awesome Dream SMP Books](#), and I will adore you forevermore, [The Awesome Fics Bookshelf](#), [020](#), [OMG \(👉°\)](#), [☞ Pogchamp DSMP Fanfic!!](#), [SBI because I crave found family](#), [hixpatch's all time favorites](#), [face the music](#), [I would sell my soul and every organ to even the sketchiest mofo in the joint just to be able to read these again for the first time again](#), [Found family my beloved](#), [Finished Fanfiction](#), [hugs](#), [WOO Insomnia Time](#), [\(Mainly\) SBI centric fics that I actually enjoyed \(very pog\)](#), [crow's favourite found family aus \[mcyt\]](#), [cauldronrings favs \(◡ ◡ ◡\)💎](#), [DAMP&HC: in my heart:](#), [Dream SMP. ft. Techno&Tommy](#), [bee's fics for ariel](#), [Fluffy Adoption Stories](#), [c tommy im so sorry u deserve so much better](#), [dsmp fics i really like](#), [fics I could reread a million times](#), [Things to fuel my escapism](#), [minecraft mechanics](#), [Works ready to be binged](#), [finished fics i've read](#), [This is such a good fic-- WAIT WHEN DID I GET TO THE END](#), [The Fics ever](#), [MMR](#)

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Every Flight (Begins With A Fall)

by [SilentTeyz](#)

Summary

The crows continue to surround him. Maybe they know he isn't a real crow, sense the impostor. Tommy would have laughed if it wasn't for the hundred fucking crows watching him like a walking bag of food.

He is about to get ejected. He is about to fucking *die*.

OR

Tommy dies in the prison and respawns in the body of a crow.

Phil and Techno are clueless that this angry injured fledgling is actually Tommy.

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

Baby steps

Tommy knows the general direction to Snowchester. It's not far, by any means: it wouldn't take even a half an hour for a human to stomp from the spawn to the snowy commune on their own two legs.

The problem is, Tommy is not a human.

Not since a few hours ago, when he woke up, sprawled under a spruce tree that seemed ridiculously big for such a giant as himself.

There was no mistaking the ugly stone and wood walls for anything but the spawn trap - or rather, failure of it - that the old members of the server had set up ages ago.

Last thing he remembers was the world going blank as the back of his head slammed into the obsidian wall. And before that - Dream's punches, his fists barreling into Tommy's face, stomach, ribs. Bones cracked and his body screamed, and he begged and pleaded, and he didn't want to *die* -

Yeah. Maybe don't think of that.

The point is, Tommy probably died and respawned. He was not supposed to - given that he was in his last life - but he was not going to complain about it either.

That is until he tries to stand up and finds out he doesn't have fucking legs.

He doesn't have a lot of things, actually. Like a normal mouth, face, fingers or elbows or arms whatsoever.

Scientifically, birds probably possess all of the above, but Tommy never bothered to learn their anatomy. Was he supposed to? I die and respawn as a bird is something everybody *definitely* encounters at least once in their lives.

Tommy can think of it with irony now, but his first reaction had not been pretty. He freaked out a big time and probably had a panic attack or two as he did so.

It's all blurry, now, and Tommy suspects slamming repeatedly into trees and stones and roots have something to do with it. Whatever force that had forced him into a bird's body did not include movement skills to the package. That is, with zero experience of controlling it Tommy's coordination is on the level of a toddler, if not a newborn baby.

Tommy keeps trying to straighten normally, like humans do, on instinct, and topples over immediately. Apparently, he is supposed to stay leaned forward and *fuck* that feels weird. Everything feels weird. Tommy tries to stand up again, but falls forward and slams into the ground with his beak.

Fuck.

Tommy misses his legs, his arms and his whole lanky stupid body.

Couldn't he respawn as a something more human-like?

Even a zombie would be fine. Sure, he would be stuck under a tree for the rest of the day, and his flesh rotting on him doesn't sound fun either, but Tommy would've preferred anything to trying balance himself with a fucking beak.

At this point Tommy wants nothing more but to curl up on himself and just. Wait for something or someone to pick him up.

Tommy cannot afford that, however. He suspects nobody even knows he died in the first place, let alone that respawn had glitched so much he had ended up in a wrong body. That is, he needs to find someone who will be able to recognize him even like this.

Someone he knows for ages.

Someone really close to him.

And no, Tommy doesn't think about his numerous wives, but about Tubbo.

Tubbo is his best bet right now - If he won't help him, then nobody would.

It takes a painful hour for him to finally figure out how to keep himself upright. Two more are spent on developing his walking from stumbling over with each mere shift of balance to clumsy jump-steps.

Tommy doesn't have the time to celebrate his achievements, though; he will proceed with that once he is in Snowchester. Tommy walks past familiar buildings, and with most of them, he has to throw his head back to see the top of. Even the dirt shack people used to make fun of him for seems gigantic in comparison with the size of his new body.

Tommy continues stomping down the Prime path, but he can't help but freeze when movement flashes in the corner of his vision. It's another bird and –

Oh. That's not just another bird, that's Tommy.

Or to be exact, his reflection on a dabbling surface of a water puddle. Tommy rotates his head, snaps his wings open and folds them back, and the black bird copies every single of his motions.

It's a crow, there is no mistaking it. A very hot one at that, Tommy convinces himself, but somehow the joke does little to fight the sudden frustration clawing at his chest.

It downs on him at that moment that he is actually stuck in a fucking crow's body, of all things. Tommy wishes so bad he is dreaming or hallucinating that he almost jumps into the water to check it, but there is a certain disgust that arises on the perspective of getting his feathers wet that makes him dismiss the idea.

As much as the exhaustion in his limbs can tell, this *is* very much real. And if he wants to get out of the situation any soon, he should be moving to Snowchester. Tommy doesn't actually know what he is going to do once he finds Tubbo, since his best friend is not an admin and hence can't fix his respawn glitch problem, but he knows they're going to figure out something together, like they always do.

The shortest path to Snowchester lays past Tommy's hotel, and immediately on sight, he notices a major issue.

There is a building next to the Big Innit hotel that certainly wasn't there a week ago. Tommy couldn't care less – things are build and destroyed on this server practically every day – if it wasn't for the bright sign flaunting the name, 'Bee n' Boo hotel.'

Now, there is an only one person on the entire server who could put a bee in a name of a business, and that fucker is also Tommy's best friend. A fucker because apparently Tubbo had decided to compete with his hotel while he was in the fucking prison. Which isn't only frankly unfair but a shit ton insensitive of him.

Sometimes, Tommy doesn't understand what's going inside of Tubbo's head. It isn't what attract his attention the most, however, but the 'Boo' part in the hotel's name. Is it somehow related to the dumb peekaboo game people play with babies? Because if not, Tommy has no other idea what it could stand for –

Wait a fucking *minute*.

Don't tell him it's what Tommy thinks it is, because if he's right, then Tubbo had opened a hotel business together with Ranboo. Ranboob. The tall half-enderman fucker Tommy haven't talked to since, like, exile, and whose he had seen hang out with Tubbo suspiciously often in the past few weeks.

Tommy's not jealous. He is just confused and angry, and he wants a reasonable explanation from Tubbo, *right now*.

But his friend isn't here, and before he can snap out of his thoughts and rush to Snowchester again, the front doors of the Big Innit hotel fly open, and Jack Manifold bursts through them.

"Jack!" Tommy screams. It comes out as a caw, because *of course* it does, but he still yells again, "Over here!"

Jack doesn't see Tommy, doesn't even acknowledge him tearing his throat raw trying to call for him. He trots to the giant 'Big Innit hotel' billboard, humming something upbeat under his nose. A smile blooms on his face, absent of his usual expression of grim discontent, and it looks from all hints like Jack is celebrating something.

Tommy stumbles closer and closer until he is just a few feet away from Jack, and is about to scream again when he sees Jack unwrap a roll of paper and suddenly dump it on top of the billboard. Did Jack decide to update the design?

Tommy tilts his head and watches confusedly as the man completely covers up the old sign with a new one, but it all clicks in place when Jack steps away to view the results of his work.

'*Big Jack Manifold hotel*,' the billboard says in possibly the ugliest handwriting ever.

Tommy gasps from the sheer audacity of the act.

He was absent for one fucking week, and Jack is already taking over his hotel.

The man was acting suspiciously from the very beginning; Tommy should have listened to his own intuition and never employed Manifold in the first place.

Jack clicks his tongue, satisfied, and says to himself, "Looks better now, doesn't it?"

Not it fucking *doesn't*.

Tommy caws angrily, startling Jack and making him jump a foot into the air.

That's right, bitch. He should be afraid. Tommy is going to fucking show him why seeing a crow is a bad omen.

Tommy lunges, aiming at Jack's leg. He would've preferred to tear the man's face to paper shreds, actually, but he can't fly so he will get what he is offered. Tommy's beak snaps shut around the fabric of his pants, and he tweaks and pulls at it fiercely.

Instead of screaming and begging for mercy, Jack suddenly laughs.

"Seriously?" he grins. "What are you even trying to do, stupid bird?"

"That's it," Tommy growls, blood boiling in his veins, "Your free trial of life has ended."

Jack yells when Tommy's sharp beak pierces through the fabric and into his ankle, kicking his leg out on reflex. The crow doesn't have the time to dodge as the heavy boot slams into his stomach, knocking all the air out of him and sending him flying backwards.

The world spins before his eyes, flashing between hotel and grass and dirt and *shit* he is falling off a cliff.

The moment of weightlessness is long enough for Tommy to feel his entire body going icy cold. He tries to spread his wings to slow down the fall, but it's already too late.

Crack.

Tommy screams.

It hurts, and it hurts so fucking much that the first few seconds Tommy can't see through the veil of white-hot pain. His right wing surges with burning agony that shudders his entire body and breaks through his throat in a form of an abrupt cry.

Jack kicked him off a cliff.

Jack fucking *threw him off a cliff.*

Tommy was hurt badly before: he had a sword pulled through his stomach, blood flowing out in crimson fountain, and felt his own skull shatter, pierced by a steel-tipped arrow. He experienced far worse wounds and injuries before, but that fact doesn't make the pain any more bearable.

Crows can't cry, Tommy finds out. If they could, he would've already sobbed into his feathers.

Tommy hears a caw, then another. He pays them no mind, still curled up into himself in a pathetic puddle of feathers. But when the separate caws turn into steady rumble, he snaps at the sounds and gulps involuntarily.

All around him, crows gathered.

On the ground, their feet sinking into the grass, on the branches of nearby trees, on the ledges of the steep cliff he has fallen off from. Dozens of birds, all staring at him intensely with their tiny black eyes. They caw, and the sounds don't seem necessarily angry or threatening, but Tommy doesn't speak bird and all he knows they were cornering him, preparing to launch.

Tommy doesn't know whether crows are cannibals, and he doesn't fucking want to learn.

"Go away!" he yells.

It comes out as a hiss, and even if it draws some crows away, retreating with their wings half-hung in the air, the majority stands still or moves a few jumps closer. Tommy presses himself into the ground until his entire body shivers - from the cold, of course, because he isn't fucking *afraid* of a bunch of birds.

Very unhelpfully, it comes to his mind that a gather of crows is called a murder. A friendly bird group wouldn't be called a *murder*, of all things.

The crows continue to surround him. Maybe they somehow know he wasn't a real crow, sensed the impostor. Tommy would have laughed if it wasn't for the hundred fucking crows watching him like a walking bag of food.

He is about to get ejected. He is about to fucking die.

Tommy hates this body, he hates this situation, but he doesn't want to get eaten alive by a bunch of creepy birds.

When one particularly bold crow flies over and lands right in front of him, Tommy snaps.

He pecks the crow's neck.

The bird lets out a pained cry, but Tommy couldn't care less. He doesn't want to move, but the crows don't give him another choice. A shadow flashes over him, and with it comes a rush of adrenaline strong enough to muffle out the pain as Tommy scrambles himself up and drags his injured appendage towards a spruce tree growing twenty feet away.

Immediately, the whole murder explodes with series of caws and wings flapping.

Wings.

They can fly, and Tommy cannot.

Fuck fuck *fuck*.

Tommy runs like he had never run before in his life.

Meaning that he runs with a speed of a legless pensioner.

Anything is better than just standing and accepting his death, however, so Tommy sprints as best as he can on his tiny feet, miraculously not faceplanting into the ground with every step.

Tommy dives under the low branches of the spruce tree and clings to the trunk as if it could save him from hundreds of crows that immediately start gathering outside the curtains of pine needles.

None of the birds duck after him, however. Maybe they are afraid to get attacked. Tommy really hopes that is the case because the other option is that they are just waiting for him to get out. Hunting him. Preparing a trap.

Every small movement resonates with excruciating pain in his right wing. Tommy's sure it's broken, and the fact that he doesn't see any blood doesn't mean that the sharded bone didn't do any serious internal damage. Besides, if the injury doesn't kill him, thirst or hunger can; the latter immediately reminds of itself in persistent throb in his stomach.

Tommy can't stay here forever, and as if the situation couldn't get any worse, he hears steps.

Ground crunches under the weight of an unknown person. The steps are fast at the beginning but start slowing down as they get closer, and they are too loud to belong to any of the wild animals who are always too careful to be heard so clearly.

It has to be a person, then.

Somehow, that knowledge only makes Tommy's fear worse. His memory snaps back to the Pandora's Vault. The thin shadow of the tree is not that different from the dimly lit prison cell. In both places, he is trapped. In both places, he is injured and afraid.

Who knows if the person will look at the pathetic tiny crow shaking with dread and decide to put it out its misery. Or kick him like Jack did, Tommy wouldn't put it past majority people on the server. Sappnap haven't killed any pets in a while, but maybe it's just because he switched to torturing wild birds instead.

Tommy freezes as the cawing of the crows outside surges in a deafening choir. He flinches and stumbles into the trunk with his wing, and the injured appendage explodes with pain.

Tommy cries out - and as if on purpose, it's that exact moment when the crows decide to fall silent. Tommy snaps his beak shut, but it's too late - a pair of boots stops right in front of the tree; they are so close he can see individual scratches on the shabby leather material.

Clothes shuffle as the person kneels in front of him.

Tommy tries to bolt before he gets trapped again - but the crows are still surrounding the tree and *fuck* he has nowhere to run.

He tries to squeeze on himself, begging not to be seen. The person moves slowly but so do the predators sneaking up on their preys. Tommy can feel his heart slamming into his ribs with such a force he is afraid it might break them.

As the person slowly lowers himself to the ground, his eyelids fall shut. He doesn't even care what happens next. Or, the opposite, he is afraid of it so much he can't even bring himself to look.

Tommy waits for the inevitable: for a hand to crush his skull or to suffocate him to death. A second passes. Nothing happens. Tommy counts to five but only gathers courage to open his eyes again after a solid minute and is immediately met with a familiar face staring straight at him.

"Hey," Phil says. "What are you doing here, little one?"

Tommy's blood runs cold.

Of course, it's fucking *Phil*.

Now it makes sense where all the crows were coming from. Phil has an entire army of them, a flock of birds he calls Chat, following him around like loyal dogs.

Phil continues to stare at him with a soft frown. He almost looks concerned like that, but Tommy sees threat in every little twitch of his lips and brows. Phil's angry, isn't he? Did he accidentally trespass the flock's hunting territory or something? Did Phil send Chat to hunt him down? Did the avian somehow recognize Tommy and saw it as a chance to get a revenge on him for betraying Techno?

Tommy doesn't know and that what makes the situation terrifying. The annoying urge to vocalize his fear is overwhelming, but at the same his throat tightens so much that even air flows through it in abrupt whistles.

Phil opens his mouth and makes strange purring sounds at him. If it's meant to be soothing then there must be something broken within Tommy because all he feels is second-hand embarrassment – Phil looks ridiculous like this, crouched on the ground and cawing like a bird.

Tommy answers with a hiss. The sound comes out easily. He wonders if it could be count as a swear in crow language or whatever they use to communicate. Phil clicks his tongue in the way that sounds thoughtful and sad at the same time.

"What did scare you so badly, mate?"

You. Just leave me alone and I'll be fine.

Phil doesn't understand him, of course. Or he does and pushes through anyway. Tommy is glued to the ground as open palms start slowly moving towards him, and only snaps when he feels fingers touching his feathers.

He tries to bolt, but it's too late. Tommy is wrapped around tightly in Phil's hands and all his thrashing is useless against the hold as he is being slowly pulled from under the tree.

Rationally, he knows Phil is too strong for him to fight against, any human is, really, but it doesn't stop him from maneuvering to try and peck at his fingers.

A particularly desperate lunge startles his wing again. Tommy cries out, and Phil makes another of his weird sounds at him. It vibrates in the avian's throat and comes out as a soft rumble. Tommy swears it doesn't affect him at all, but there is something in the monotony of the sound that soothes the ache in his body and the frantic pounding of his heart.

The struggle is fruitless, anyway, and Tommy falls limp in Phil's hands.

Whatever happens to him next, he cannot do anything about it.

Abduction

Chapter Summary

Techno has an axe in his hand, which on its own is a very, very bad sign. And there is a stump on the ground, too, a flat surface, a perfect chopping block to slaughter a chicken on.

The problem is, Techno doesn't have chickens.

Chicken is a bird, however, and so is Tommy, at the moment.

They are going to fucking decapitate him.

Chapter Notes

Quick update pog

Note that this fic mostly follows canon and that Wilbur is Phil's only biological son.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy never got to formally meet Phil before the Dream SMP.

He didn't even know who's trash he was stealing from until Wilbur had first caught him, climbed half-way into the trash can and a rotten apple clenched in his teeth.

They stared at each other for a long moment – dark-brown eyes widening as they met the stare of narrowed blue ones – until Tommy screeched on top of his lungs, flipped him off, and bolted for the forest with the speed of a rabid raccoon.

Now, Tommy doesn't have a single idea of what in that three second encounter could have possibly indicated him as suitable for adoption – not like a normal adoption, but *'this wild thing is now my brother'* type of adoption, because Wilbur was a teenager himself at the time – but that's basically what happened in the months following the incident.

Will didn't even have to try hard, just leave food for him on a plate outside, and Tommy, reluctant about returning to the house at first, started showing up every other day. Simple snacks turned into three-time meals, toys and even books, after he was taught how to read, and eventually, Tommy practically spend all his time near Wilbur.

“Admit it,” Wilbur once said, “you keep coming back because you like my company.”

“Don't flatter yourself,” Tommy snarled back. “I like food, and you're just dumb enough to give it away for free.”

Wilbur reached to scratch at the boy's head, and latter's eyes tried – and failed – to flare aggressively when he inevitably melted into a puddle under the gentle soothing touch.

“I hate you,” Tommy deadpanned.

Wilbur raised a brow at Tommy, snuggled by his side, face buried deeply into the soft yellow wool of his sweater.

“Uh-oh,” the corners of his lips tugged into a smile, “Of course you do.”

“Fuck you.”

Phil probably knew of Tommy’s existence, but only from his son’s words, as the boy avoided their house whenever the avian was home; massive black wings, as if woven from the darkness of the Void itself, filled him both with awe and dread.

Tommy still remembers his own surprise when he learned that *Philza Minecraft* – the legendary avian, one of the oldest player the universe had ever known, famous for spending years in hardcore servers, where the smallest mistake could send you into a permanent oblivion – was Wilbur’s father.

Even more he was stunned by the fact how *casually* his friend had talked about him. Wilbur mentioned Phil constantly, in every memory he shared, about things as simple as learning to ride a bike or shoot a bow or about a picnic they went on together when he was younger.

Tommy, who’s never knew his own parents - if there were any to begin with - absorbed these stories with a great greed.

A father, he had learned, is someone you can always rely on; a father, Wilbur had told him, is the who will support and love you no matter what happens.

In Tommy’s head, Phil turned into a certain image, of a winged warrior, merciless embodiment of justice, but also of a gentle and caring man you could turn to in a time of need, and all the more it shocked him when he watched the avian put a sword through Wilbur’s heart.

A few days later, Phil showed up at Tommy’s doorstep, carrying a pile of the boy’s items he lost during the battle with Technoblade and his withers.

Tommy didn’t see the deeply guilty expression on Phil’s face nor the way his wings fell sorrowfully; instead, all he could concentrate on was Wilbur’s sword resting against the avian’s hip and blood – a hallucination caused by the lack of sleep and rest – staining his hands.

Tommy’s knees gave up on him in an instant. Weapons and armor clattered to the ground as Phil dropped them to catch him and embraced the boy in a tight hug, rubbing circles into his back as he sobbed.

It was pathetic and humiliating, and Tommy hates himself for that moment of weakness, but he craved for comfort at the time and even murder of his brother wasn’t enough to overcome the blind adoration he developed towards Phil.

They never talked about Wilbur’s death after that, though the endless sadness and feeling of emptiness shared one for both Tommy and Phil build a certain understanding in their relationship.

It grew into something more personal and close with time; first when they rebuild L’manburg together, and later, when he and Techno rescued the avian from under the house arrest, and maybe that was the reason it hurt so much to see Phil standing across the Doomsday battlefield, disappointment and disdain in his eyes.

In the end, Tommy doesn't know what he expected. He is just a random kid Wilbur once claimed as his brother, and Technoblade is Phil's longtime friend, so by betraying Techno, he had turned the avian's anger towards himself.

Phil's a scary man when he wants to be, and Tommy's head pounds with *danger danger danger* all the way to the Nether portal, because, apparently, that's the place the avian takes him to.

Purple particles dance in front of his vision, and suffocating warmth envelops Tommy, two factors that instantly make him feel sick. He closes his eyes and steadies his own breath to try and lessen the nausea.

"I'm sorry for this," the avian says, noticing his struggles, "My home's too far to walk there on foot."

Tommy regrets his stomach is empty; he would've loved to puke all over Phil's hands.

"Fuck you," he says, and for what he feels like the hundredth time this day, he regrets humans can't understand him.

He notices how the portal flashes a few times behind Phil, and a few crows fly through and circle above the avian's head. There are certainly less of them here than they were in the Overworld, and Tommy suspects that normal crows don't like interdimensional travel either.

As far as he can tell, Phil and his Chat aren't going to murder him any soon. They've got too much chances for that already, and on top of that, the avian could've just tossed him into lava if he felt like it. Staring at the burping mix of magma and molten rocks burns Tommy's eyes and brings up unpleasant memories, so he decides on pressing his head into Phil's hand instead.

It doesn't take a genius to understand where they are going now. Phil said 'home' himself, and Tommy hears cobblestone clatter quietly under the avian's feet. He built that path himself and knows that it leads to the Arctic commune's Nether portal.

It's an unpromising conclusion at best and a terrifying one at worst. Tommy still suspects Phil somehow knows about the respawn glitch – why would he pick him up otherwise? - and all of this is just a prolonged execution and Techno is already waiting for them on the other side of the portal.

Sure, Techno hadn't killed him that one time he stole shit from him for his confrontation with Dream, but maybe it was because he thought Tommy was a goner anyway. And the fact that he survived may not sit with him that well.

Purple flashes through his closed eyelids, and freezing wind breathes into Tommy's - face? Muzzle? What do birds even have? - and the contrast with the burning temperatures before is overwhelming.

His eyes snap open and his head turns sharply to look around him – to the snow-covered fields and hills, to the spruce trees darkening in the distance, pointing at the blue sky sprawled above with their sharp tops.

Technoblade isn't here, unless he somehow learned to dive-hide in the snowdrifts like a fox.

"Just a little longer now," Phil says.

He is talking to himself, yet it is Tommy who tenses. The fact that Techno isn't here doesn't mean he isn't at home now. Shiver runs down his spine, and this time he isn't sure if it's from the cold or the fear.

Tommy is pressed close to Phil's chest with one hand as with the other he unbuttons the cloak on his shoulders. As if simply holding him like hamburger wasn't enough the avian wraps it around him in loose layers.

"Fucking great," Tommy grumbles angrily from where his head peeked out of the fabric, "Now I'm a crow burrito."

He can't move like that at all; even his other, healthy wing is now forced to fold firmly against his body. Tommy can't complain too much, though; the cloak is lined with fur, and he instantly feels warmer now that there is something between his thin feathers and crispy tundra air.

This shouldn't distract him from the fact that he is still in danger. Tommy fights against the drowsiness that arises from the softness of the fabric around him and gentle sway of Phil's movement, but sleep is instantly forgotten when Techno's cabin comes in sight.

A house, of all things, couldn't make Tommy panic; it's the man who stands in front of it that causes ice needles of fear to sting from his clawed feet to the tips of his wings.

Techno has an axe in his hand, which on its own is a very, very bad sign. And there is a stump on the ground, too, a flat surface, a perfect chopping block to slaughter a chicken on.

The problem is, Techno doesn't have chickens.

Chicken is a bird, however, and so is Tommy, at the moment.

They are going to decapitate him.

It's the perfect murder plan. No witnesses, no body – not the real one, at least – and they can just throw his corpse to the real crows and there wouldn't be anything but a skeleton of him left. People would just assume Tommy died in prison and won't investigate it any further.

"Techno!" Phil calls.

"Phil," Techno greets. "How was your trip?"

His voice is closer and louder than Tommy expects, and it is followed by the sound of the axe slamming into wood. Tommy shudders, squeezing on himself harder and harder until he can barely breathe.

Please just forget about him. Please just leave him alone.

"Surprisingly eventful. I found someone on my way back from the XP farm. Well, Chat did, and then brought me to him."

That must be the moment Techno notices the bundle in Phil's arm – one that Tommy is desperately trying to get lost in – because he asks, "What's that?"

The hold around him loosens just enough for the fabric to slide down from Tommy's head. He is exposed to the sun and to two sets of intent gazes. Tommy only feels them; his eyes are closed again, and he is suppressing the rises and falls of his chest involuntarily.

"That's a crow." Tommy can imagine Techno frowning from the tone of his voice. "And I'm sorry to disappoint you, Phil, but it looks dead."

Wait.

Tommy played dead without intending to, and it actually worked. He only stiffens further and holds his breath when Phil's finger carefully slides down from his neck to his chest and then abdomen.

"He had been fine just a minute ago." Phil sounds confused and concerned.

"Can you perform CPR on birds?"

Oh fuck.

Tommy knows CPR – which is a little weird until you remember he participated in wars – and he is *not* going to tolerate that shit while he's conscious.

His eyes snap open, and without really thinking it through, he *bolts*.

One good lunge and Tommy is out of the cloak like a bullet. The fact that Phil loosened the hold as well as the surprise effect gave him enough space and time to slip away.

The fall is fast. And not as bone-breaking as the last time. Tommy twists his back to meet the ground as he falls, and a little sideways to ensure he doesn't land on the injured wing. Even softened with the deep snow, it *hurts*, and he has to press down a whine as he scrambles to his feet and runs.

Tommy wouldn't make a single step if it wasn't for the pure adrenaline that kicked in at that moment. He feels like a fucking Neo when Phil's hand slides just an inch past his feathers. Tommy turns acutely and finds himself sprinting towards the stump when Techno finally catches him.

"Let me go, bitch!" he screams. "Die!"

He is not as gentle as Phil is. Techno just scoops him up with one hand, and he flies just by the axe sticking half-way out of the stomp and his own disheveled reflection flashes in the polished metal of netherite. There is a pile of firewood stacked to the side of it that Tommy didn't initially notice.

"That's a very jumpy crow you have," Techno returns Tommy back to Phil. Crow, he said. Not Tommy.

They don't know he – the bird – is Tommy, do they?

"He is just very scared," Phil says. "That's a baby bird, or a fledging, to be exact. Chat didn't find his parents nor his nest, and crows fly short distances at this age, so he might have just wandered off too far on his own."

Tommy is so relieved at that moment that he doesn't even snap at Phil for calling him a baby.

Can't be complaining about small details when he was just basically handed a 'congratulations, you're not going to be murdered!' card.

If neither Phil nor Techno know the truth, then Tommy's execution is put on a pause. Which is a good thing. A great thing, actually, since Tommy very much likes being, you know, *not dead*.

Tomm's racing heart calms down slowly, though he isn't sure he should be relaxing just yet. It's an injured *crow* that Phil decided to help, seemingly just out of the kindness of his heart. If it was Tommy – as in normal, human Tommy – laying there with a broken arm, he wouldn't bait an eye.

Or maybe he would stab and put him out of his misery, depending on how merciful he feels at that moment.

Tommy still remembers the warning cut on his shoulder left by Phil's sword the other day he tried to get into Techno's house in his absence.

And from that arises a new issue: if Phil didn't recognize Tommy immediately on sight, there is no guarantee he won't suspect anything in the future.

Tommy looks like a crow, talks like a crow, but he doesn't act or move like one at all.

Who knows what Phil would do if he learned the truth. Kill him? Break his other wing? Tommy doesn't even want to think of it for too long. One thing is for sure, Phil and Techno would get angry at Tommy for tricking them - even if unintentionally - into helping him.

"You've never seen me as a friend, Tommy!" Techno's voice rings in his ears past the roars of the withers, "You've just used me from the very start."

Well, no. Fuck you, Techno. Tommy isn't going to argue with his own memories nor the real Techno standing in front of him.

Oh, and speaking of this Techno. Fuck you too.

Techno, completely oblivious to the angry swears sent in his address, crosses his arms on his chest in response to Phil's words.

"So, you're taking him in, then." Techno doesn't ask. Just states. Sounding like a parent whose child brought a stray dog home, knowing full-well that he isn't going to say no. "Don't you have enough crows as it is?"

"Chat follows me around because they want to," Phil chuckles. "This little guy broke his wing, and I'm keeping him for only for as long as it takes to heal."

Now *that* is finally some good news.

Tommy perks up on, raising his head and cawing slightly at Phil. There wasn't a word behind it this time and rather just pure relief. Tommy ducks his head back down when Techno's glances at him out of the corner of his eye.

"If he doesn't run away from you earlier," he rumbles.

"That's what I wanted to ask you," Phil nods, "Do you have a spare cage I could use?"

"Not a cage," Techno says. "But a box, with air holes and stuff."

"That's even better. Can you bring it to me in a minute?"

Techno nods, and Tommy exhales loudly when the man's broad back disappears behind the door of his cabin.

Now that his life is not in an immediate danger, he has the time and attention to notice that there is, in fact, a new house at the Arctic commune. It is almost identical to Techno's cabin and is connected to it with a short spruce bridge. Phil walks across it, still holding Tommy, and enters with him into the house.

First thing he notices is a portrait on the wall.

Wilbur is so much younger on it that Tommy remembers, without that heavy feverish flare to his eyes and tiredness evident in every little crease of his face. His brother smiles here, too, a bit smugly, but genuinely, something he did so rarely in Pogtopia that the boy almost forgot what his smile even looked like.

The picture hangs just above a door leading to the balcony Tommy had seen outside, so he turns away and settles on staring at Phil instead.

“Well,” the avian says. “Welcome to my humble abode. Let’s get you patched up now.”

Phil doesn’t know he is actually a human and yet still talks to him like one. Tommy finds it weird, to say the least, but it’s better than listening to the sound of his own heartbeat pounding in his ears as he is laid and held on a table.

Tommy is tiny. He is, apparently, a *fledging*, whatever that means, and not an adult crow. In comparison with him, Phil is a giant, and Phil, honestly, is far from the tallest person on the server.

As much as the avian seems friendly towards the random bird he found, he still could end his life just by stomping on him or simply squeezing his neck too tightly.

Tommy’s head turns and twists to follow Phil’s every move as he reaches for something in a chest while still holding him firmly and he wonders if that’s what prey feels like being cornered by a predator.

Phil pulls out a roll of bandages. Tommy’s breath hitches at the sight of sharp scissors, but the avian only uses them to cut the fabric into thinner ribbons. The way he easily and quickly wraps them around his wing makes him think Phil had done it many times before.

Well. Phil *does* have a personal army of crows, and maybe there is a few as unlucky as him to get their wings broken in stupid accidents.

Except what happened to Tommy wasn’t an accident at all. He would call it an unprovoked assault. Tommy was the one to attack first, yes, but he had a reason and the rights to do so, and Jack *didn’t*.

Tommy is genuinely going to kill him once he gets out of here.

He twitches with rage at the thought, frankly, forgetting that Phil’s still is working with his injured wing, and the constant pain pounding from it that had *just* soothed down soars again.

Tommy doesn’t fight a whine that escapes his throat. And a few others that follow it, too.

Phil’s expression softens into something Tommy can’t quite decipher. He doesn’t understand why it is directed at him rather than the meaning of it, because the expression itself is quite familiar.

It’s the way Wilbur used to look at Fundy. The way Wilbur used to look at Tommy, too, prior to Pogtopia, like he is something precious that must be protected and taken care of.

Phil purrs. It feels as though the more he makes that sound the further it sinks into Tommy, as stupid as it is worded.

Sounds can’t sink in. But this one makes him relax under the touch that should be frightening in normal circumstances.

It isn't, and as Phil finishes binding the bandage, Tommy understands exactly why.

He missed it, being able to trust others to take care of him.

Tommy doesn't trust Phil, however, even if that look on his face reminds him painfully of Wilbur. It isn't directed at him, after all, but at a poor little bird with a broken wing the avian had saved today.

Tommy is not a crow. He is not a bird. He is a human stuck in a very odd and humiliating situation.

"Feels better, doesn't it?" Phil says, finally readjusting his hold to put Tommy straight rather leaning sideways uncomfortably.

"It still feels like shit," Tommy informs him. The injured wing is now folded as naturally as it could be and, *well*, it's better than just let it drag on the ground like it previously was. Tommy adds, quieter, as if Phil could even understand him, "But thank you, I guess."

The front door opens to reveal Techno and a large box in his hands.

The harsh tundra wind that is quick to slip through is nothing in comparison with the slap Tommy feels when he recognizes the box as the one he used to hide from Dream in during his stay at Techno's house.

Fuck his luck. How didn't Techno use or destroy that thing for so long?

"Thank you, mate," Phil says.

Tommy doesn't quite hear it. He barely notices Techno and the avian picking up things from around the house and putting them in the box. Tommy stays in this dormant, dull state, just Phil places him inside and puts down the lid.

He immediately launches at the top. Tommy tries to open it with his beak first, then his claws, and very soon ends up mindlessly slamming into it in hope to knock it out with sheer force.

To say he doesn't like tight spaces is an understatement - he fucking *despises* them. And even more Tommy is - is there even a point to lie to himself now? - afraid of the tight spaces he was put through traumatic experiences in.

The insides of the box still hold the traces of his own nails scratching at it in panic, and even if there's more space now that Tommy himself is smaller, the holes aren't big enough for his head to fit through them.

He is *trapped*, breathing hard in the dim darkness and a no way to escape. Recent memories of Pandora's Vault send his mind into an ugly mess. Tommy caws, whines, screams and puts every single sound he can make to use.

Phil responds to him, again, but no amount of purring can pull him out of this one.

"Aren't birds supposed to calm down in the darkness?" he hears Techno ask.

"They are," Phil says, sounding lost, "And that is a quite unusual reaction."

That makes Tommy pause.

He had just thought about it less than ten minutes ago; that Phil could possibly start suspecting something in the future if he doesn't behave naturally enough.

Tommy *is* a bad actor. But he isn't going to be caught so easily, in the first day spent with Phil. Especially when the price for his mistake could be as high as his own life.

Birds don't have claustrophobia, so Tommy forces himself to sit down in one of the corners of the box and takes a series of controlled breaths.

The walls are still pressing on him. He can't get enough air no matter how much or deep he inhales, but at least, from the outside, Tommy sounds like he had calmed down.

This is temporary, he reminds himself. Broken bones take two-three weeks to heal, a bit less with the use of regeneration potions. Tommy hopes that birds are not that different from humans, and he will be released by the end of the month.

He just has to be patient throughout these weeks, and then he will find Tubbo, return to his own, normal body, and everything that happened in the prison and afterwards will be forgotten like a ridiculous nightmare.

Tommy lowers his gaze and finally notices that there is a soft blanket folded on the bottom of the box. It's strangely warm, like there is something heating it up from the inside. Tommy tosses the edge of the blanket with his claws to unfold it and finds the source – a dimly shining blaze rod.

That is... actually nice.

Tommy places the rod back down, covers it up with the blankets, shuffling around with them until he deems it comfortable, before laying down and signing with relief as the warmth spread from his feathers to his skin in silky waves.

Tommy drifts.

Chapter End Notes

Hope you don't mind some angst :D

Next chapters have more fluff and humor in it, I promise. Just needed to get the backstory and prior building out of the way before we can proceed further with the plot.

If you are enjoying the fic so far, you can give a kuddo and subscribe to support it.

Bookmarks and comments are great motivators, too! You can say whatever you want, from long rambles and theories to just quotes of your favorite bits in the chapter.

Спасибо за прочтение, и увидимся в следующий раз!

Bird instincts

Chapter Summary

And that's when it happens. Tommy doesn't register what's he doing, something just clicks in his throat and the next thing he knows he throws his head back and caws.

The caw is different from the ones he made yesterday. It's more high-pitched and shorter and sounds like screeching "AAAAAH!" , like someone is getting fucking *stabbed*.

It rings in Tommy's ears from the loudness and the worst thing is, he can't stop. It just keeps coming out of his throat every second, no matter how bad he wants to shut his beak.

What the fuck?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tommy wakes up in the darkness.

The first thing he notices is the ache in his arm. Bone-deep, pounding pain that resonates with the throb of muscles in his entire body.

There is fog in his brain, too, like its stuffed with cotton or fur or maybe even feathers; whatever it is, Tommy can tell one thing for sure: he feels like absolute shit.

What had he been doing yesterday for everything to hurt this *bad*?

Tommy groans and raises an arm to rub at his eyes – and slaps himself with the feathers of his wing instead. He is confused for maybe like five seconds before the events of the past day come flooding at him at once.

Right. Still a fucking bird.

The realization alone makes him want to fall back asleep and just hope next time he wakes up he will be in his human body again.

Tommy still has no idea what exactly happened when he died in the prison that caused the glitch in the first place. He doesn't understand much about how respawns work either, only the fact that admins are the only ones that can deal with them.

Even then, it's discouraged to mess with code to avoid critical errors and is frowned upon for ethical reasons: meddling with someone's code without their consent is just as fucked up as human experimentation is.

Servers with limited respawns are not unheard of, of course. Some do it for the thrill, for others – Phil included – it's a lifestyle. The general rule is that members join them willingly and knowing the risks beforehand.

Tommy entered the Dream SMP at the time when throwing your friend off a cliff could be a fun prank you could both laugh about when they respawned, unharmed, in their bed. He never even learned that the rules had changed until he and other original members of L'manburg died screaming in a box.

There is lingering suspicion that Tommy's current situation has something to do with Dream fucking up the server rules all this months ago, but there is no use in puzzling over it now. He did respawn as a crow, and he can't fix the glitch by ignoring it or making a wish at a falling star or some shit.

Waking up each day in a wrong body *is* and *will* be disappointing, but no point in getting depressed over that. Tommy doesn't sit and cry over his problems. He stands up and deals with them, like a *man*.

Or like a crow, his brain helpfully supplies.

Fuck you, brain.

Tommy doesn't know how long he has been asleep. There is light outside the box, he can tell that much, but from the color and intensity it seems to come from lanterns and not from the sun.

Great. He hasn't been a crow even for twenty-four hours and he had already fucked up his sleep schedule.

He is hungry, too. His stomach feels like it has decided to digest itself, and, based on the intensity of the throbbing, it isn't that far from the truth.

Tommy is used to starving for days if not for weeks, a sort of skill developed over the course of his last two exiles, but this hunger is impossible to ignore.

His stomach begs for food. His head pounds with thoughts about it. Tommy wants bread, he wants his carrots, potatoes or golden apples – *anything*, just to fill the emptiness in his body.

And that's when it happens. Tommy doesn't register what he's doing, something just clicks in his throat and the next thing he knows he throws his head back and caws.

The caw is different from the ones he made yesterday. It's more high-pitched and shorter and sounds like screeching "*AAAAAH!*", like someone is getting fucking *stabbed*.

It rings in Tommy's ears from the loudness and the worst thing is, he can't stop. It just keeps coming out of his throat every second, no matter how bad he wants to shut his beak.

What the fuck?

Something moves outside of the box. Tommy registers the shuffling of feathers and steps and then the lid of his box prison starts to move slowly.

Oh shit.

The sound dies out. Phil peeks into the box and Tommy jumps away on an instinct. His feet get tangled in the blanket and he crawls his way into the furthest corner, clinging to it with his back and puffing up his feathers.

"Hey," Phil says, "You're up, mate?"

"No. I am fucking sleepwalking," he caws angrily.

Phil doesn't look intimidated. He smiles softly and then just. Disappears. Not like dissolves in thin air – much like Tommy would want him to – but he moves away from the box, leaving the top slightly open.

Tommy doesn't jump into the feeling of relief or hope. And his cautiousness proves to be not unreasonable when Phil appears again, this time with a bowl in one hand and a small spoon in the other, and moves the lid until the top is completely open.

“I brought you something to eat.”

Phil scoops up the contents of the bowl into the spoon and lowers it to the crow. And Tommy, who initially perked up at the word ‘eat’, jumps away from it in disgust. Its lamb. Or fish. Or chicken. He is not sure what that is, but it looks like meat mixed with egg yolk.

Tommy is not a vegetarian, not in the slightest, although on this server, he farmed his own food, mostly carrots, and got to eat meat only when others offered it. Even then, nobody tried to feed it him raw . *He is pretty sure that's poisonous, actually.*

So, no. Tommy is not fucking eating that. Especially not from a spoon like he is some sort of helpless baby.

“Don't be like that. You need to eat something.”

Tommy curled up on himself tighter and clenched his beak. No thank you. He would much rather just starve to death than eat this.

He expects Phil to leave him alone at that point. Surely the avian has something more important to do than to torment Tommy. But instead, Phil puts the bowl aside, out of his vision's reach, and the newly freed hand reaches to his head and forces his beak open.

The food slips into Tommy's throat faster than he can spat it right back. He expects his stomach to churn and make him throw it up instantly, but it doesn't taste as terrible as he expects it to.

Instead, his brain yells cheerfully, “FOOD!” and makes him caw strangely again like he did a few minutes ago.

Wait. So that's what the sound means? Is he fucking begging for food?

Phil brings the spoon down, again and again, and food disappears down Tommy's throat the moment he is close enough to reach it.

It's weird at best and humiliating at worst, but he can't stop until his stomach is finally full. And it feels good, dammit. The ache is gone and warmth spreads through his body and he really, really wants to chirp from satisfaction. He doesn't, because that would be beyond the line of shame for today.

Phil chuckles, looking at his grumpy form. “It wasn't that bad, now, was it?”

“Not bad,” Tommy hisses, “For prison food.”

Even if Phil doesn't know who he had abducted – not rescued, because Tommy would be absolutely fine there, laying with a broken wing – he is still being held here against his own will.

Phil's gone soon after that and Tommy is stuck in the closed box again.

There isn't much to do to distract himself from the tightness in his chest caused by being confined in the small space.

Sleep or think. Think or sleep. Or think himself to sleep or prevent himself from sleeping by thinking.

Tommy doesn't know how much time passes before he feels hungry again, but before he even can register the emptiness in his stomach, he is making the weird caws.

Tommy can't do anything about it. It feels like control over his own body just slips away from him and is handed over to something else; it sounds obscure but it's the truth, some kind of 'you're not you when you're hungry' fucking type of thing.

He muses at the possibility of him being possessed, but the more he thinks of it the more it seems like it's a totally opposite situation. He is thinking normally, he recognizes human speech and even tries – fruitlessly – moving like one; all in all, the conclusion is that it's Tommy's mind that is possessing a crow's body.

It doesn't explain where the sounds are coming from. Well, his vocal cords, obviously, but more like why he can't control it.

Instincts, flashes in his mind in a quick thought. And that is... Actually not that bad of a guess.

Tommy has enough of hybrid friends and acquaintances to know what a hindbrain is and how instincts tend to fuck them over at the most inconvenient of moments.

It would explain a lot of things. Like why he is able to make different types of caws and crow calls without learning them beforehand, or why Tommy stumbles away from Phil when the box is opened again.

Logically, he knows he shouldn't be in any danger. Tommy dislikes Phil, frankly speaking, but he has never been afraid of him for real before, and they already established that he isn't going to get killed any time soon.

For a bird, however, Phil's a threat by default, as any human is. No logic can argue with the fact that his bones could be snapped with one quick clench of the man's fist.

Maybe Tommy's hindbrain is now similar to one of a hybrid, a mix of two worlds. Except that Tommy is not a hybrid and a full-on crow and he doesn't know whether that means that his instincts are even worse.

He and Phil soon establish some sort of routine. Tommy sits in the dark, either sleeping or fiddling with the blaze rod and the blanket out of boredom. He gets hungry in a few hours – that's as precise as he can tell it - and proceeds to tear his throat raw, calling for food. Phil comes to feed him, closes the lid afterwards, and the cycle starts all over again.

The initial fear Tommy had towards him starts to fade away, just a tiny bit. The hunger is stronger than cautiousness and Phil's appearances are associate with food, though Tommy still hisses at him when he tries to touch him. It feels great not to be starving, yes. Trapped in a fucking box with literally nothing to do – not so much.

On the ninth or tenth feeding time, which had to be the third day of his imprisonment at Phil's house, when the avian leaves the box open for a few seconds whilst putting away the bowl, Tommy executes a plan.

The walls of the box are too high for him to just jump out of, and his balance is not that good to try and climb his way with the holes and gaps between the spruce planks. Tommy doesn't know how to summon bird-sized ladders from thin air, so he turns to the only helpful object he has – the blaze rod.

A blaze rod is, essentially, a warm glowing stick. Which would make for a fine lightsaber, but Tommy's more interested in the fact that it can be used as a flat impromptu staircase.

For a thing so tall in comparison with Tommy the rod is fairly light - which makes sense, since these things are meant to levitate around the blazes. He leans it against the wall of the box and hurriedly climbs to the top and even manages to grab it with his beak the last moment before Phil returns from the kitchen.

"How did you-"

He looks surprised, pauses in the doorway, even. Yeah, bitch. Don't come any closer, because he has a weapon now.

Tommy twists his head, still holding onto the rod. It was meant to be a threatening swing, but instead, the shift of balance sends him falling from the top.

He doesn't even have the time to squeak. Instead of hitting the floor harshly, however, he ends up in Phil's hands. The avian lunged forward just in time to catch him mid-air.

"Careful, mate," he said, chuckling. "You're quite clumsy for a bird."

His smile is kind. His laugh is as warm as are the hands around him. Phil makes cooing sounds at him, like yesterday, and it's the stupid bird brain instincts that make him press and relax into the touch.

Tommy wants to chirp back. "And you're quite short for a human," he snarls instead.

Alas. Height jokes and insults are not relevant when he himself is the size of a baseball.

Tommy pecks at Phil's fingers, and the fucker doesn't even wince. Just calmly puts him down on the floor. Which is a critical mistake on his behalf, because Tommy takes the opportunity and bolts.

Well. Maybe Phil did think this through. The door is closed, both the front one and the other leading to the balcony. Tommy looks in-between them and decides that the next best thing would be to hide behind an enderchest.

It's instantly colder here, now that Tommy is clinging to a wall and there is everwinter tundra out on the other side. At least it's not that dusty. He doesn't see any spider web either.

"You sure that's the best spot you could have picked?" Phil says. Like he had expected Tommy to try and hide on the first opportunity.

"Fuck off," Tommy caws.

And Phil, surprisingly, does. For the next ten minutes, the avian walks around the room, moving something, and curiosity gets the better of Tommy, so he carefully peeks out from his niche.

The fucking box is there again. But its toppled over to the side, in a way that the top is now a sort of an open entrance, turned towards him welcomingly.

The blanket is in there, too, folded in a way that it looks like a soft nest. Something that is certainly more comfortable than hiding behind furniture.

Tommy's head flickers in all directions whilst he is looking for Phil, and the man is found shuffling with something on a crafting table, with his back turned on him.

Tommy weighs his choice for about a minute before deciding that freezing his ass off is not worth the illusive feeling of safety; If the avian would want to get him out of there, he could just move the enderchest slightly.

When Phil turns to face Tommy, he is already sitting curled up in the blanket nest. The avian kneels in front of him, albeit keeping a distance, and when the crow retreats backwards, he purrs at him comfortingly.

Reluctantly, Tommy chirps back.

Chapter End Notes

Kudos, bookmarks and comments are pog and motivate me to write faster ;)

Sorry this chapter me took so long to post! Had to deal with some minor health issues recently. I am planning - and hoping - to update it every 3-4 days now and that shouldn't be hard considering I have bits for future chapters written already, so stay tuned :D

The Syndicate

Chapter Summary

The Syndicate.

It sounds so *Technoblade* that it makes Tommy want to throw up.

Techno is a pussy, and that's a known fact, but he proves it only further by creating an entire anarchist organization dedicated to destroying governments.

Seriously, what the fuck is wrong with this guy?

Sure, Tommy has been distancing himself from the entire nation creating thing, even refusing to join Tubbo's Snowchester when he was offered a citizenship, but he doesn't try to dictate others what they can or cannot do.

Techno's insistence on getting into other people's business makes his blood boil.

And it's not just Technoblade. Phil is a part of the Syndicate, too. It was expected given that the avian always takes his friend's side, but it still pangs his chest with a feeling oh too close to disappointment.

Chapter Notes

Huge shoutout to [Mellodi](#) for providing me with ideas and bits for this and the upcoming chapter, as well as overall beta-reading the fic! She is amazing person and I cannot thank her enough for her help <3

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

A week passes with Tommy barely noticing it fly by.

It's been... strangely nice. Quiet and calm in a way Tommy hasn't felt in a long, long while.

Phil has been looking after him, making sure he is well-fed and healthy, checking up on his wing every other day and changing the bandages if he managed to loosen them with movement.

Tommy does that a lot these days. What is a small cozy living room for Phil is an entire playground for a fledgling crow; he scrambles onto furniture, climbing it with the help of tenacious claws and flapping of his good wing.

He misses his normal body immensely, but with practice, he is getting better and better at, well, being a bird. The first time Tommy managed to hoist himself onto the dining table he felt like he had conquered the fucking Everest.

Phil cheers together with Tommy over his little achievements. Like he is a parent watching his child take their first steps or speak their first words. Or some similar shit.

It should be humiliating. Generally weird. But somehow, it makes warmth grow inside of Tommy's chest.

He tried to push that feeling away, or ignore it completely, but it became increasingly more difficult in the last few days.

Tommy finds himself strangely attracted to Phil's company. His presence is welcome, and the shadow of his wings moving along the walls brings an overwhelming sensation of familiarity and safety.

Which is absolute bullshit. Phil's anything but. He helped to destroy L'manburg; Tommy has seen him kill Wilbur with his own two eyes.

Tommy tells himself that and still follows the avian whenever he goes, from the kitchen to the bedroom and the living room and *he doesn't want to let him out of his sight even for a slight second.*

Look. Tommy has been quite lonely recently, okay?

Even prior to the prison incident, with Tubbo always busy with Snowchester stuff and all his other friends scattered around the server, building nations and getting into conflicts, Tommy hasn't got a lot of company in the last few months.

And that's what isolation always does to him, isn't it? Separate Tommy from people for a few days and he will start clinging to the first person he meets, and this time it just had to be one of his mortal enemies.

Phil's not a good person. But he's kind, and patient, and overwhelmingly, annoyingly fucking nice. It's hard to think of him as a murderer and a terrorist when he speaks to Tommy in a soft, caring tone and gently strokes the feathers on his head.

Tommy's supposed to hate him. He does hate Phil, but at the same time, he wants to be as close to him as possible.

It's fucking pathetic. Tommy knows that. But he can't do anything about it except hate himself even further.

At least there is one good thing in this situation: Tommy is long past the point of his fear for Phil. The time he would previously spend watching the avian cautiously from his corner of the room, ready to bolt at any moment, is now used to annoy the living shit out of him.

The couch pillow looked funny at him, so Tommy decided to tear it apart and carry the feather filling into his own box nest.

His claws would occasionally get itchy, and Phil's favorite armchair is the best place to scratch them and get rid of the irritating sensation.

Waking up at wicked hours and screaming like he is getting murdered is definitely his most favorite thing to do yet. Tommy even learned to climb ladders so that he could get to the attic, where Phil's bedroom was placed, and yell directly into the man's ear.

"You're not a crow," Phil would say, head in his hands, "You're a fucking cat."

Phil also occasionally calls Tommy a seagull, a pest, and a lot of different things that make him question his own bloodline, but most often he settles for the classic, '*chaotic little shit!*'

He tries to entertain him in different ways. Gives him little things to fidget around with, a bunch of rusty keys, golden ingots, toys and, when he grew desperate, even a whole fucking diamond.

Oh, it was insulting on so many levels.

Throwing away and wasting a precious material people work hard to get - that's just straight up rich people shit.

Nobody likes rich people, and Tommy least of them all. Phil should've seen it coming, he thinks, when the man walks into the room to him holding the precious gem right above the kitchen sink.

"Don't you dare," Phil freezes in the doorway. "You try that and I-

Woops.

The diamond fell from Tommy's beak and right into the hole, Phil's swinging hand just an inch away from catching it mid-flight and Tommy dashing down the counter and onto the dining table.

"Oh, I'm so sorry," Tommy goes as far as to arrogantly cock his head. Phil can't understand him, but sarcasm is a language as universal as violence is. "My *hand* slipped."

The avian snaps at him abruptly, "How am I supposed to get it out now?"

Tommy is very glad Phil asked that. "Philza Minecraft," he announces, hopping around the table happily, "is a plumber! He's the best plumber I ever met!"

Human or not, Tommy has a talent for getting on other people's nerves. He makes a series of clicking sounds in his throat, the closest to laughter as he can get to.

Phil runs a hand down his face and sighs. "You're doing this on purpose." He sounds defeated and impressed at the same time. "Out of spite, like a spoiled toddler throwing a tantrum."

Phil would have much more fun time with a toddler, really, because by bringing Tommy into his own house, he had doomed himself to be tormented by the most chaotic and annoying creature in existence.

Tommy puffs up his chest proudly and nods without thinking, and Phil blinks at him, slightly surprised.

Oh shit. Birds don't nod. Birds are not supposed to understand human speech at all.

Tommy rushes to nod again, and again, and now he's frantically shaking his head up and down as if he's having a stroke.

Or dancing.

Or having a stroke while dancing.

That would absolutely not work if he was a human, but it does now, as Phil's no longer staring at him and instead shifts closer to the table. He moves one of the chairs to sit down, and Tommy scoots out of his arm's reach and tilts his head when he sees the thoughtful crease of his forehead.

“In my very long, long life, I have never ever seen a crow that’s as smart as you are,” he says. “You react to speech so well that it sometimes almost feels like I’m talking to another human.”

Oh *fuck*.

Tommy almost gets a real stroke right there and then. Has he not been careful enough? Did Phil somehow learn the truth?

Phil doesn’t hear Tommy’s pounding heartbeat nor does he react to him stiffening in one place, one foot frozen in the air and the claws of the other sinking deeply into a gap between the spruce planks of the table.

Instead, he runs a hand down his own face and chuckles. “It’s ridiculous, of course,” he says. “My imagination is playing tricks on me. I guess that’s what happens to a person when his only company are his ever-hibernating friend and a murder of crows. Not today, though. Today’s going to be slightly different.”

The wave of relief following Phil’s words is so strong that Tommy leaves his last words without any attention.

The avian leans slightly forward, extending a hand to pet the feathers on his head. Tommy would usually allow him to, only because it feels unbearably similar to Wilbur fondly stroking his hair, but after the fright Phil gave him? The only acceptable response is violence.

Phil yelps when Tommy launches at his hand, claws first. He misses, unfortunately, and hops away to the furthest edge of the table, hissing.

Normal person would get angry at Tommy. Or annoyed, at least. But Phil’s a weirdo, because he laughs, like if Tommy attacking him is something amusing.

“You’re an evil little shit,” he announces.

Oh, Tommy’s going to show him evil.

He launches at Phil again, this time grabbing the long sleeve of his shirt with his beak, growling angrily.

The front door shoots open, bringing in winter cold and a broad figure of a person that makes shivers run down Tommy’s spine.

Techno is in his full equipment: a sword at his hip, armor strapped on top of a plain white shirt and vibrant red cape thrown casually onto his shoulders and clasped with a diamond buckle.

Last time Tommy had seen him like this, his home was reduced down to fucking bedrock, so excuse him if he folds his wings a bit too neatly when the red eyes behind the expressionless skull mask land on his shivering figure.

“What’s happening here?” Techno’s gaze flickers between them, and Tommy... Despite everything, Tommy is still actively trying to bite off Phil’s finger.

“Ah, just some casual bonding time,” Phil brushes him off with a snicker, “We’re getting along really well recently.”

Techno hums, “It seems to me it’s more like he is trying to murder you, Phil.” He takes a step further into the house, and another growl vibrates in Tommy’s throat. “But sure, whatever, you’re the crow expert here. Just keep in mind that we need you for the meeting today, alive and, preferably, in one piece.”

“Meeting?” Tommy caws. His head flickers between Techno and Phil. “What meeting?”

Phil’s face suddenly becomes so concentrated that he doesn’t even notice when Tommy finally lets go of his hand. “Is it the time already?”

Techno nods, “The third member should be arriving soon.”

Phil tilts his head, “Then I’ll be ready in a minute.”

Techno leaves, closing the door behind himself, and Phil shoots up from the table, leaving Tommy to shift from one foot to another in confusion.

The avian puts on armor, straps weapons to his belt. Tommy doesn’t understand anything beyond the fact that Phil is going somewhere. Going as in leaving the house. Leaving the house as in leaving Tommy here, *alone*.

Phil hoists himself up the ladder and disappears in the attic to grab something. When he returns, Tommy is already balancing on a hook by the door, sinking his claws into the avian’s cloak and bucket hat.

“And where do you think you’re going?” he narrows his eyes.

Phil throws one look at his defensive position and disheveled feathers and fucking coos.

“I’ve got some business to attend to today. I promise to be back in a few hours.”

That’s... actually perfect. How many times this week Tommy has told Phil to fuck off? How many times he shouted at the avian to leave him alone? Phil never did, but now the opportunity is practically handed to him on a silver plate.

A few hours without Phil’s constant watching eye. A few hours without his fussy care. A few hours without his comforting presence, and warm smiles and soft words.

Tommy shrinks onto himself and clenches the hook like his life depends on it.

“Oh, mate,” Phil says. “You don’t want me to leave?”

Tommy is not clingy, but even thinking of staying in this house, confined and alone, brings anguish and sinking cold fear.

For once, he is grateful for his new body; at least the black feathers are thick and dark enough to hide the blush of embarrassment washing over him.

“I’m really sorry,” Phil’s expression melts apologetically, “But it’s really important, so if you could please let me take my cloak and hat- “

Phil extends a hand to take him off the hook, and Tommy hops over to... not the floor, but Phil’s head.

“What are you doing?” The avian chirps, surprised, while Tommy commits war crimes on his hair. His claws get tangled in golden curls, but he manages to rearrange them in a way that resembles a very messy nest.

“You don’t need a hat,” he flops down, folding his wings comfortably, “When you have me.”

Tommy can’t see Phil’s expression from up here. For a second, it seems like the avian will try to get him down, and the crow is determined to fight for his new spot, further clinging to his impromptu nest.

“Alright. You can go with me,” Phil signs. Tommy can’t help the chirp of happiness that escapes his mouth at that. “But only if you leave my hair the fuck alone.”

Tommy does not, in fact, leave Phil’s hair alone.

Every sudden movement shoves Tommy harshly either to the sides, forward or backwards, and he has to sink his claws deep into the roots of Phil’s short curls, trying not to get launched off his head.

It’s uncomfortable and tough for the crow and straight up painful for the avian, but Tommy stubbornly hangs onto his hair, just out of pure principle, even when they get outside of the house.

He initially thinks of using this opportunity to try and escape Phil before his appointed release date; it would be hard to slip away now that Techno saw the avian’s new headwear, but not completely impossible, if he times his moves right.

Tommy’s curiosity is what probably will lead him to his doom one day.

When Techno hands Phil a peculiar looking book with pompous golden inscription, ‘*The Syndicate*’, Tommy leans forward to read it, too.

Some words are hard to recognize. Letters look like they’re hopping, up and down, or twisting in a way that makes it hard to recognize any.

It’s strange. Like really, *really*, strange. Tommy feels like he did all these years ago, the first few weeks of Wilbur teaching him how to read.

Oh fuck. Did the respawn glitch somehow gifted him with dyslexia on top of everything else? Or are all crows unable to read?

Well, of course they *aren’t*. Crows are birds, after all, and birds are too stupid to learn to read.

But Tommy’s not a crow. He’s a human that has been reading for the most part of his life.

He doesn’t have much time to muse on that, however, especially after Phil – to his great luck – reads the book out loud, leaving him completely stunned by the contents.

The Syndicate.

It sounds so *Technoblade* that it makes Tommy want to throw up.

Techno is a pussy, and that’s a known fact, but he proves it only further by creating an entire anarchist organization dedicated to *destroying* governments.

Seriously, what the fuck is wrong with this guy?

Sure, Tommy has been distancing himself from the entire nation creating thing, even refusing to join Tubbo's Snowchester when he was offered citizenship, but he doesn't try to dictate others what they can or cannot do.

Techno's insistence on getting into other people's business makes his blood boil.

And it's not just Technoblade. Phil is a part of the Syndicate, too. It was expected given that the avian always takes his friend's side, but it still pangs his chest with a feeling oh too close to disappointment.

What he did not expect at all is for *Niki* to show up.

Loving, caring Niki, with a compass in one hand and a netherite sword in the other.

The weird table room in the Syndicate's underground base has signs with substitute names for each of the members, and with some struggle, Tommy is able to make out of bold 'Nemesis' written on the one assigned to her.

He never learned of what happened to L'Mantree during Doomsday, but rumors were that Niki was the one who brought the flaming torch to its roots. Tommy didn't believe it at the time, but he certainly does now.

He finally agrees to migrate from Phil's head onto the table, clawing at particularly interesting patterns on the wood.

If Tommy really had any similarities to a bird before the glitch, it would probably be his attention span. He tunes in and out of the conversation every few seconds, but a long pause that settles at some point makes him snap back into awareness.

"I have been hearing rumors that there is a new nation being formed to the West of L'manburg, in a snowy forest." Techno's tone lowers into something serious. Dangerous, even, and Tommy stiffens against his will.

"I have been there," Niki says thoughtfully. "There is definitely a nation forming. I think we should check that out at some point."

Techno nods, leaning towards the table slightly, "We should probably investigate. Make sure there is no tyrannical government being formed there, you know. We're not just out there to cause problems for no reason. Just making sure there is no government; not everything's government, after all."

Tommy doesn't hear half of the words that are being said. All he processes is the fact that they are talking about Snowchester.

Tubbo's Snowchester: The one he dived into developing with passion equal to one that Tommy blazes with towards his hotel. He was furious when he learned that Jack Manifold stole it, and it makes his chest clench painfully to imagine what Tubbo would feel if Techno decided to destroy his home, *again*.

The Syndicate is a secret organization, clearly meant exclusively for certain people, and Tommy isn't one of them. If Techno knew who he really is, he'd already be dead, even if he's not spying on them intentionally.

Tommy is playing a dangerous game. But if it means saving Snowchester from L'manburg's fate, then he's willing to take any risks.

Niki adds, "I remember the path to Snowchester. I can show you the way, if we want to go there right now."

"We still could talk a bit, though." Ranboo's voice sounds unsure. He is the only person in the room who looks possibly more worried about the topic of Snowchester than Tommy does. Tubbo mentioned something about Ranboo being one of the citizens of the snowy commune, right?

That would make sense with how much time the two spent together recently. A week ago, that thought would make Tommy feel his chest burning with a feeling too akin to jealousy, but right now, Ranboo is the only person in the Syndicate who Tommy doesn't currently want to call a bitch.

Tommy knows better than anyone how easily Ranboo can get involved in conflicts he didn't cause in the first place. This time he got caught eavesdropping on a conversation between other members of the Syndicate, and then was pressed into a corner where he basically was intimidated into joining the organization.

Ranboo looked pathetic earlier, hunched on himself and shivering under the snowfall, and he somehow manages to seem even more pitiful when all the attention in the room snaps onto him. "There is probably, you know, more stuff that happened, right?"

"Do you have anything to bring up?" Niki asks.

Techno nods and turns to Ranboo, "Oh yeah, you want to tell us something?"

Ranboo's tail curls around his leg so tight it probably cuts out the proper blood circulation, and the purple particles frantically circle his anxious form. "Techno. You've been asleep for the past weeks, yeah?"

"Other than the day Phil went to get some resources," Techno nods.

"And Phil?"

"I have been a bit busy with bird rehabilitation," the avian chuckles.

Tommy grunts in response, but his attention is still fully on Ranboo. He notices the way he grips the base of his hair and on how his face wrenches when Niki tells him that she has been underground for the past couple of weeks. "So you guys don't know, then."

There are burns on Ranboo's face, Tommy suddenly realizes.

He had seen similar wounds littering the enderman hybrid's arms after one time when he had to shield himself from an unexpected rain.

Ranboo long since then made a set of water-proof armor to avoid getting burned again, so Tommy has no clue where these wounds could have come from. Especially so oddly shaped. Starting from his eyes and moving down his face and towards his chin –

Wait a minute.

Had been Ranboo... crying? What the fuck could have he been crying over?

“Why did it have to be me who knows,” Ranboo whispers. “Remember Tommy, Tommy, right?”

The question lands like a punch to Tommy’s face. As the realization downs on him, he finds himself unable to breathe. Frozen in time, deaf to anything but the enderman hybrid’s wavering voice.

“Tommy got trapped in prison with Dream, “ Ranboo says. “He’s dead.”

Chapter End Notes

Cliffhanger go brr.

Chapter 5 is not ready yet but oh boy do I have plans for it.

Comments are always welcome, whether it be theories, opinions, emotions or just even simple screaming. I don't respond to all of them to avoid repeating myself (I do answer questions, though, as well as longer comments), but do know that every single one is **HUGELY** appreciated!

Also, we've got fanart! Check out the links further down in the fic notes :D

The breaking point

Chapter Summary

“How did Tommy die?” she asks. “Do you know what happened?”

“I was talking with Sam. Dream – Dream beat him to death.”

Tommy’s heart skips a bit. In the silence that settles afterwards, he tries to get a good look at everyone’s reactions. Niki is leaning forward on the table, and her eyes twitch, borderline hysterical, but the lack of sadness in her expression doesn’t hit as hard as the mostly neutral-sounding, acknowledging hum that leaves Phil’s lips.

And Techno... the boar skull hides Techno’s expressions. His face would probably have that shitty flat look on it, anyway. Techno is stingy with emotions, so his mood is largely hidden in his gestures and body language and tone.

Tommy allows the tiniest pang of hope to flare within him when he notices that Techno is looking down on his own palms resting on top of the table. Surely, he will say something. Surely, Techno won’t just let it slide by.

“That’s a pog,” Techno says. “Moving on. Hated that guy anyway.”

Something shatters deep inside of Tommy.

Chapter Notes

Tw: panic attacks, non-graphic

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Dead.

Tommy is dead.

Obsidian burns his back; the heat embraces him, tucking under the blanket of suffocating warmth but he is cold. Tommy is cold because he is *dying* –

Breathe.

Tommy is not dead.

Tommy is not dead because he respawned. Tommy is alive. He is in Phil’s house. Right? Shit. Fuck. Tommy can’t see anything, he is blind, and all the sounds have disappeared, too. But if he is not at Phil’s house, then where is he at?

It smells like bakery bread, pane oil and like somebody hadn't had a shower in a long time. Oh fuck. He is the one who smells, isn't he?

Concentrate. Tommy still feels floaty, and he just realized that he had closed his eyes shut. Oh, he is fucking dumb. Now it makes sense where his vision went.

Okay, Tommy was wrong. He is not at Phil's house but at the Syndicate meeting room. And he is sorta cowering on the table, staring at Ranboo at the opposite end of it.

And Ranboo. Tear tracks on his face, old ones, but he looks like he wants to cry again. That's... That's not good. Tommy has to put effort into remembering why, something about alliums and letters and rare visits. He pushes past the fog in his head that rises when he tries to latch onto those memories, because Ranboo's lips are moving and the more lucid part of his mind knows that it is something important.

"-It was only supposed to last for seven days, I think. But –" Ranboo takes in a shaky breath, "Sam said that he died."

Realization hits him like a charging ravager at full speed. Ranboo knows that Tommy died and oh shit – he knows that Tommy died!

Thinking of your own death cheerfully would be an alarming sign in every other situation other than Tommy's. Because if Ranboo knows what happened to him in the prison, he has to know about the respawn, too.

That's why he agreed to join the meeting, isn't it? He came for Tommy, but couldn't find a more delicate way to tell him he knows other than dumping it on the Syndicate in the crow's presence.

Tommy is so quick to jump to his feet that he almost falls off the table. He catches himself on the edge, frantically flapping his good wing, and throws himself forward and towards Ranboo.

Perhaps Tommy is acting too suspiciously. Everybody's gazes snap to him; he can imagine Techno raising a brow behind the ugly mask of his. Fuck him. Fuck it all. As smart as Techno and Phil are, the dotes – the announcement of Tommy's death, and a fledgling crow's strange behavior – are too loose for them to connect.

Phil chirps in surprise, a hand tries to catch on him from behind – but Tommy is too fast, fueled by the hope warming his chest. "Ranboo, you pussy!" he screams, "I'm here!"

He expects the edges of Ranboo's lips to tilt, for him to smile awkwardly and let out a greeting rumble like he usually would. Tommy expects him to nod, to wink, to confirm his hope in any way possible, but instead, he is met with Ranboo's confusion.

The eyes flickering over to him are colored differently but they both reflect how the crow freezes in front of Ranboo. Tommy looks lost and disappointed, even to himself, as his fluffed up feathers fall flat against his body and his blooming joy dies out to pitiful embers.

"Ranboo, it's not fucking funny," he croaks. "It's me, Tommy! The Big T himself! Quit acting like I'm not here!"

Ranboo blinks at him blankly. And that's all it takes for the disappointment to start settling in. Ranboo doesn't recognize him, and Tommy feels stupid for even assuming that he would.

“It’s alright,” Tommy chirps, half to himself, half to Ranboo. “I don’t know what I was hoping for, but I guess it was worth the try.”

His head falls low, and he lets Phil reach out and gently squeeze him from both sides. “It’s not the best time for acting out, alright?” the avian says quietly, stroking the feathers on his wing.

Tommy distinctly remembers that the Syndicate is, in fact, still discussing his death. Something squeezes in his stomach, the feeling tight and so sickening that it makes him want to throw up.

He will have to sit through that, people talking about him like he’s not fucking here. Tommy takes a deep breath and tries to concentrate on Phil’s warm touch as Niki breaks the long pause.

“How did Tommy die?” she asks. “Do you know what happened?”

“I was talking with Sam. Dream – Dream beat him to death.”

Tommy’s heart skips a bit. In the silence that settles afterwards, he tries to get a good look at everyone’s reactions. Niki is leaning forward on the table, and her eyes twitch, borderline hysterical, but the lack of sadness in her expression doesn’t hit as hard as the mostly neutral-sounding, acknowledging hum that leaves Phil’s lips.

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“That’s a pog,” Techno says. “Moving on. Hated that guy anyway.”

Something shatters deep inside of Tommy.

“Techno!” Phil sounds accusing. At least Tommy thinks he does, he can’t quite hear it through the pounding in his ears.

“Techno has all the reasons to hate Tommy,” Niki says defensively. Techno nods at her gratefully and raises his arms in the air.

“I don’t wanna speak ill of the dead, but I’m just saying: do you know how many chances I gave that guy and every time he was like,” Techno’s pitch went just a tad bit higher, imitating Tommy’s voice, “*‘Screw you, Technoblade, I’m going to hang out with all that guys that stabbed me in the back and sent me into exile!’*” Techno leans back on his chair, chin tilting down in a relaxed manner, “So, at this point, it’s not really my problem, you know.”

Techno pushes a sword through Tommy’s chest, plunges it between his ribs and into his beating heart.

Not literally. But a part of Tommy wonders if it would be less painful if he had dropped dead at the exact second the words left the man’s mouth.

Techno is right. From the first word till the very last one, he is right. But why does it still hurt so fucking much?

The Green Festival was the turning point for Tommy; he looked into Tubbo's eyes and couldn't recognize his own broken and twisted reflection, and it *scared* him. The person he saw was nothing like he used to be. Tommy was able to see clearly for the first time in months and realized that he had almost lost himself for good.

In the end, Tommy and Techno were too different. Their ideals, goals and beliefs never overlapped fully, and it stood in-between their relationship, time after time.

And it hurts, alright?

Because Tommy cares. After fucking everything, he still cares, about every person he got attached to and was betrayed by, and Techno's not an exception. It's hard to erase the admiration for someone who he used to praise and look up to for literal years. Techno didn't have to help him, but he took Tommy in at his lowest point and he is fucking grateful for that.

Tommy didn't regret his choice at the Green Festival; he did what he thought was best at the moment and feels guilty that it ended with Techno left behind alone in the middle of enemy lines, feeling betrayed and thrown away.

Even after all these months, he still secretly hopes that they will be able to mend their relationship once again, but Techno clearly doesn't feel the same way.

It's fine.

Tommy is not going to break down because someone he cares about had basically wished death upon him.

If Techno wants to hate him, *fine*. Tommy will return that rage tenfold. Deep down, he knows he can't override his attachments with hatred, but he will try really fucking hard to let himself pretend he can.

"Tommy can't be dead," Niki says, her voice breaking through the fog in his brain. "Tommy can't die."

Phil tilts his head in agreement, "I haven't seen the corpse yet," He looks at Ranboo. "And like, it has gotten quieter, so I think he is still stuck in the prison."

"But..." Ranboo fiddles with the pocket of his suit and sighs, "Alright."

Phil opens his mouth like he is about to add something, and that is the moment when Tommy finally snaps.

He is afraid of Techno, heavily so, yet at that moment he sees nothing but red, and his veins burn with overwhelming rage. Phil yelps when Tommy pecks his palm harshly and lets him out of surprise.

The healthy wing swings open in an attempt to make him look bigger and more intimidating, all growls and hisses and exposed sharp claws. Tommy makes it to the other end of the table and launches himself at Techno with a battle cry.

"I'm going to kill you," he screams. "I'm going to gut you and dance on your fucking grave!"

Almost every inch of Techno's body is covered with heavy armor. The only thing protecting his neck, however, is the loosely hanging cape.

Tommy would reach it. Would tear his skin to shreds and slice his throat open. But Techno throws his arm forward – the netherite glints with enchantments – and he is knocked back on the table with a heavy *thud*.

The landing is harsh, but it's nothing compared to the wave of agony that tears him from inside. Tommy whimpers, scrambling himself up, and sees Phil shoot up from his seat, "Techno, what are you doing?!"

"I didn't do anything. It's the Thorns on my armor," Techno says defensively.

"Phil, is your bird alright?" Niki asks, voice concerned.

It feels as though someone dumped an entire bucket of ice on Tommy. *Your bird*. Like Tommy is some kind of pet. Niki recoils with a startled yelp when the crow goes for her hand and almost scratches her finger.

"I'm not even a real crow, you asshole," he hisses.

"I'm sorry, Niki," Phil shakes his head. "I don't know what got to him. He is not normally that hostile."

Phil rounds the table to grab him, and Tommy bites down a whine of pain as he throws himself out of the avian's reach.

"Calm down, mate," Phil shushes him, "It's okay."

The soothing thrill that leaves the avian's throat that normally feels like a blast of chilling wind to his anger, this time, makes him furious. Tommy is not a fucking bird. You can't dismiss him like one.

"It's not fucking okay!" He screams.

Phil is leaning forward now. Maybe he wants them to be on the same eye level, for himself to appear smaller, less threatening. His eyebrows are knitted with concern, and Tommy almost falls for it. Almost throws himself forward and into the avian's arms, and halfway through it dawns on him what he is about to do.

Anger and disgust crush Tommy. And suddenly he is not rushing to Phil for comfort but charging with his claws at the avian's face. Tommy almost gouges out Phil's left eye. Three of his claws tear through the man's forehead and slash his eyebrow diagonally.

Phil's hand flies to his face. A pang of guilt and regret in Tommy's chest dies out when he doesn't see any rage in the avian's expression. Phil just touches the wound with two fingers, sees blood on them and – and throws him an apologetic look?

"Shouldn't have pushed it, I'm sorry," he says, and Tommy –

Tommy understands that it's pointless.

Phil is staring at him calmly. And Tommy – Tommy *hates* it. He wants Phil to scream and argue with him like he would be if he was still a human. Not look at him with these blank unrecognizing eyes. Everyone in the room gazes at him the same way.

He wants to cry. It's not fair. It's not fucking fair that Tommy feels all these things and nobody even acknowledges them. Nobody understands. He screams but nothing and no one can tell what's going

on inside him except himself – like he is banging on a mirror and it won't fucking break.

Techno eyes the entire scene indifferently. "I was going to suggest we pay a visit to this... new nation, whatever it was called, now, but," he gestures at Tommy's shuddering, heavy breathing figure, and Phil shakes his head.

"I can't leave him alone when he's like that. You go without me this time."

"You sure?"

They talk some more, but Tommy can't muster enough energy to listen, and the voices are muffled down to a monotone rumble in his ears. What's the point, anyway, if none of their words are addressed to him?

Techno leaves first. Niki and Ranboo walk side by side, both sending last concerned looks in his and Phil's directions.

"Come one, mate. Let's go home," the avian says.

Now that anger has died out, Tommy feels hollow. As though someone carved out his insides with a knife and stuffed him with frustration instead. Tommy lets himself be wrapped in the long cloak and carried out of the room.

The first thing Tommy does when he is released into Phil's house is hide behind his box.

He knew it before and he knows it now, that nothing is stopping the avian from getting him out if he would want to, but it gives Tommy's startled bird brain a mere sense of safety and security and he needs it now more than anything in life.

Besides, he is mad at Phil. For manhandling him and for treating him like an animal. But you are an animal, something whispers in the back of his mind, and Tommy mentally flips someone off – Techno? Phil? Himself? – as he tries to distract himself by concentrating on the deep burning feeling inside of him.

Tommy's not... upset, for the lack of a better word, only at Techno. The feeling of glass shards tearing through his lungs on each breath stabs again when he peeks out of his shelter and finds Phil rummaging through his chests, one hand pressing against the fresh cuts on his face and the other reaching for a healing potion.

He looks too casual for a person who just learned about someone's death. Maybe just a bit more tense than usual because of the light crease on his forehead and stiffened movements of his wings. The way his eyes flicker over to Tommy for a moment betrays who the cause of his concern is.

Any other time it might have warmed up his heart, but right after what happened at the Syndicate meeting? Tommy wants to wail his throat out.

Because that worry is not directed at Tommy. Well, it is, but not on the fucking correct version of him. Phil is more concerned about a crow having a breakdown than a sixteen-year-old beaten to death in a prison cell.

Tommy doesn't know what he had expected from a man who had cold-heartedly killed his own son, but a part of Tommy– the desperate, hopeful part– wanted a stronger reaction. Perhaps regret. Shame.

Anger, maybe, at Dream, for killing him, and at Sam, too, for letting it happen. The desire for satisfaction of someone mourning for him is, frankly, messed up, but it is fueled by a much simpler wish – to be loved and cared about.

If they cared, they would grieve for him. If they cared they would go to the effort of visiting the prison - or Sam himself - to learn about Tommy's fate. If they doubted Ranboo's words, why didn't they make just a quick portal trip to confirm the truth?

The answer is because they hate Tommy. His face, his voice, his entire existence is – was? – a menace to them. Techno hates him. Niki, as far as he can tell, too, and Phil doesn't give jack shit about Tommy either. If there is one person on this server who would be affected by Tommy's death, it would be Tubbo –

Oh shit, Tubbo!

Tommy shoots up to his feet. Blood rushes in his veins, and Tommy barely notices when he hits his head in the narrow space between the box and the wall. He is an idiot. He is a fucking idiot. How hasn't he thought of Tubbo already?!

If Ranboo knows what happened to Tommy in the prison, then Tubbo does too. Tubbo thinks he is dead. Tubbo has been thinking that he is dead for an entire week and that realization alone makes Tommy want to claw at a wall.

Phil jumps, wings swinging open when he comes out of the bathroom and Tommy flashes at his feet and throws himself at the door. Maybe Phil hasn't closed it fully. Maybe he left it just slightly loose and Tommy will be able to slip through –

The door doesn't do as much as twitch. Tommy lets out a caw of frustration and falls flat on his stomach. Phil eyes him from the other side of the room, and when the crow stays silent, slowly walks up to the door and squats beside him.

"We can't go outside," he says. Tommy wants to snarl and look away, but can't take his eyes off the fresh patch on Phil's eyebrow. The avian had washed away the blood, too, and Tommy thinks that it's a pity. At least the crimson mess would have hidden the tormenting-kind expression on Phil's face.

"It's alright," Phil reassures him. As if Tommy regrets scratching him, which he fucking doesn't. "I shouldn't have brought you there in the first place. Meeting a lot of unfamiliar people is overwhelming even for a human, let alone a bird, so it's my bad for not thinking it through. But I know what can cheer you up."

Tommy's stomach churns when Phil leaves in the direction of the kitchen and returns with a bowl. After the humiliation of the first days, Tommy refuses to be hand-fed and only eats it directly from dishes, so the avian puts it in front of the crow and tilts his head like he had expected him to lunge for it right away.

And that's what Tommy would usually do. But what Phil's doing, it's how someone would feed a pet. So he recoils, back to the door, and curls up into himself tightly.

"I'll leave it to you for now, okay?"

Phil's wings flash as they fold neatly to enter through the kitchen doorway, and Tommy is left alone to his own frustration. He tries the front door a couple more times, just in case, but to no avail – Tommy can't leave, and thus he cannot get to Tubbo, either.

Tommy, contrary to popular opinion, has a lot of fears, and the worst of them – fear of abandonment. Fear of being left behind while your friends and family move on without you. It took less than a week into the exile for people to stop caring about Tommy. And now that he is dead – *not dead*, he grits his beak, but other people think he is – how long will it take for the server to forget him like an unpleasant memory?

Deep down to his bones, Tommy's afraid that by the time Phil finally releases him out of the house, it will be too late. He can see himself running up to Tubbo, human again, on his own two legs – and meeting the other boy's cold, unrecognizing eyes.

“Who are you?” he asks.

No. No, no, *no*. Tommy can't let that happen. He needs to let Tubbo know that he is alive. Before he properly thinks it through, Tommy is already in the kitchen, meeting Phil's surprised eyes, with a desperate plan forming in his head.

“Are you alright, mate?” Phil asks.

There are five stages of grief: denial, denial, denial, denial, and bitch.

Techno's is clearly on the bitch stage, but Phil, at least Phil has the decency not to sound fucking happy about his death. Or Tommy really fucking hopes he is not, because his life and sanity are on the line.

Maybe he is making a mistake. Maybe he is going to get gutted because of his own carelessness. But Tommy is not supposed to be a crow. Tommy is not supposed to be a bird. Tommy is alive and he fucking wants to be a human again, *now*.

Phil's eyes widen as he hops onto the table just to stomp around it and kick a fork. A plate with a fresh beef steak almost falls off the table when Tommy attacks it in a swift dive. The avian catches it at the last moment and grabs the knife out of the crow's way when he tries to lunge and throw it off the edge, too.

“What the fuck are you doing?” Phil yelps.

Tommy jumps down from the table and storms into the living room, where a small desk is placed in the corner, “Getting your attention, bitch!”

The fact that Tommy handles himself with perfect balance as he climbs and pulls himself up onto it used to feel like an achievement, but now it only leaves a bitter aftertaste in his mouth. Tommy shouldn't have been so accepting of this situation. It shouldn't feel so natural to use his claws to open the drawer and pull out a clean piece of paper and a quill.

He can't find the ink. Shit. Phil is in the living room already, where is that fucking bottle?

“What are you trying to do?” the avian asks, stopping at the desk and resting his palms on the back of the chair pulled up to it.

“To talk to you, you dickhead!” Tommy snaps. “Where the fuck did you put the ink?”

Phil glances curiously at the paper. Then at the quill. Tommy is ready to cheer and scream when Phil reaches out for one of the lower drawers and pulls out a bottle full of purplish-black liquid. He removes the plug and puts it on the desk in front of the crow, holding it with one hand.

“I’m really hoping you’re not going to spill it on purpose, mate,” he says.

Tommy barely hears him. His heart is pounding, he is suffocating from relief, forgetting to inhale between the frantic movements of lifting up the quill with his beak and dumping it into the ink bottle.

This is it, his head pounds, this is where my torture ends.

The only thing he needs now is to decide what he writes. Calling Phil a ‘BITCH’ in bold fucking Times New Romans letters is quite tempting, but he settles on something more descriptive, ‘I’m Tommy.’

It will be so easy. Two words, one name, and he will be out of this nightmare of existence. Tommy splashes a couple drops on his feet as he lifts up the quill inches away from the paper, lowers it and—

And freezes.

Why is he not writing?

Tommy stares at the paper under his feet, at the quill awkwardly clenched in his beak, and he doesn’t understand why his mind goes so suddenly blank.

He tries to imagine his name in Wilbur’s quaint handwriting, put into the Declaration of Independence, or his own crabbed scribbles in the prison visitation agreement, but the memories blur into undecipherable colored spots.

What the fuck.

First Tommy couldn’t read the simplest of words, and now he can’t remember how to write his own name. Something happened to his mind. This is not normal. This is the furthest possible from normal. What the fuck. What the *fuck* –

Tommy chokes on air. He can feel his lungs tightening, his breath cutting off short. Tommy would start slipping into a fog of panic if it wasn’t for the sudden touch.

Phil!

Phil is still here, and Tommy has no way of telling him the truth.

The avian can’t help him. *Nobody* can help him. He – Tommy is stuck. One thing is laying low for the sake of his own safety. One thing is pretending to be a crow so that he doesn’t get stabbed by Phil or Techno. Completely another one is actually being stuck in the wrong body while actively losing his memories.

Phil gently puts the quill out of his grip, and has the audacity to *chuckle* at him, “Mate, you can’t write. You’re not a human, you’re a crow.”

Hearing these words from another person’s mouth is what takes to make Tommy’s heart break in half.

“I’m not a crow, I’m human!” he screams. “I’m a human, BITCH! Not a fucking bird! I’m human! I’m-!” his breath hitches, “I-I’m human!”

Phil is staring at his trembling form. For a moment, Tommy can see his eyes glint. The desperate, human part of him reaches out to Phil. The tiny, flickering spark brightens for a split second –

Until it's cruelly stomped on by the confused frown on Phil's face.

"What are you trying to tell me, mate?"

There is a phantom sensation of tears prickling Tommy's eyes, and if he was a human, he would already be wiping them away with his sleeve angrily, trying to hide the tremble of his lips.

Humans can cry. Crows cannot. Tommy tucks his own head to his chest, but he can feel no tears sinking into his feathers.

"I am human," Tommy whispers.

Tommy pauses for a brief moment; a few deep, quivering breaths, a hitch, and he jumps off the desk and bursts out of the room. He isn't looking where he is sprinting, and just lunges for the first tight and dark space he can find, throwing himself in, and closing his eyes shut.

A part of his mind is distinctly aware of Phil's voice calling for him. Most of it, however, doesn't care. Curled up there, alone and trembling, Tommy feels cold, almost like he is dying all over again.

Chapter End Notes

If you want to cry - don't hold back. I will feed on your pain. Not literally, of course, but comments are the primary way you can show your support to my work and get faster updates!

Also, if you see an interesting/unexplained detail or a line you liked in the story, I encourage you to point that out in the comments. That way I can learn what parts of the chapters you enjoy the most! Feel free to theorize, too, would be interesting to compare your assumptions with my own plans.

I accidentally posted this chapter twice because it was first put as a draft and then proper version and if you got two update emails - no you didn't.

Huge shoutout to:

Mellodi, for helping me with angst ideas and bits for this chapter;

(If you decapitate the author, Mellodi goes down with her)

And Rose/Krispy Kreme, for beta-reading it. (Thank you. I make errors like in every other sentence and you saved everyone from suffering from my terrible grammar.)

Generally for people on the discord server (link is in the fic notes) for being active and hyping me up with this chapter. I literally speedran this in two days because I wanted to show these scenes.

Chapter 6 - I'm planning to deliver some Hurt/Comfort. For now, though? Suffer. /j

Partners in crime

Chapter Summary

“Freedom!” he cries out, ducking under Phil’s arm and –

“CAW!” a ball of black feathers slumps onto the sill, startling Tommy and almost making him fall to the floor. His unbound wing shoots out for balance, claws digging into wood as he lets out a *manly* screech of terror.

What is *this*?

Well, he can quite clearly see that it is a fat crow. *Look* – Tommy is not trying to body shame, but the crow seems like a giant next to him, and that is just straight up illegal. He can’t help but fluff up his feathers to try and appear at least a tad bit more threatening. Which doesn’t mean he is afraid. It totally doesn’t.

Just as Tommy stops screaming, two more black birds land onto the sill – one with lighter, almost grey plumage, and the other one missing an eye – and now there are three ugly feathered bitches staring at him, completely blocking out the window with their bodies.

Chapter Notes

TW: Minor blood and description of injuries, non-graphic.
(Don't let this fool you, the chapter is super fluffy)
Enjoy reading!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy spends almost an entire week avoiding Phil.

It's a challenge, given that he is literally trapped within the confines of one house, but one would be surprised by how many little holes and niches a small bird can find to hide in.

The only thing that can force Tommy out of there is food Phil leaves for the crow; he drags himself over to it and slowly chugs tasteless meat. Every piece feels like it’s getting stuck in his throat, but he still eats, mainly because his instincts scream at him to.

Each following day, they become harder and harder to resist. Tommy realizes, with a sinking feeling of horror, that he is actually turning into a crow.

Yes, Tommy has looked into a mirror lately. His own frozen reflection stared back at him, broken and wrong, with tiredness sipping into every little twitch of his feathers, and the only familiar thing about it were the desperate blue eyes.

Tommy tried to concentrate on them and imagine himself – the real Tommy – detail by detail, from the soft curls falling to his forehead and to every little crease of his laughing face. He could do it with relative ease then, but how long is that going to last?

Tommy is actively losing his memories – that was the inevitable conclusion he came to after the Syndicate meeting. He can't read. He can't write. A fairy didn't descend on Tommy from the skies and hit him with a magical wand and - surprise, bitch! - he has dyslexia.

No, it doesn't work that way. Tommy had no problem reading the hotel signs on the first day after his respawn, but now? Now he can't recognize a single fucking letter.

And it gets worse than that. Tommy was staring at Wilbur's portrait the other day and came to a cold realization that he can't remember how he had first met his brother. He tried recalling what L'manburg's first flag looked like after that, what his favorite music disc is – and stumbled upon utter emptiness in his mind. Memories that used to lay in the very roots of his existence are just... Not there anymore.

Tommy has been a lot of things in his life. A warrior, a soldier, a friend, a brother – but without his memories, he will be just a mere pitiful crow, much more intelligent than the average bird, but a bird, nevertheless. Tommy is dreading the day he will wake up and won't be able to remember his own name.

He hangs onto that little of humanity left in himself. Replays the same memories in his head over and over, but every time, they become duller as the details slowly begin to drift away. Tommy wants to fight, but it feels like a losing battle.

Tommy opens his eyes and stiffens when he recognizes the blackstone room with a button on a pedestal in the center. He doesn't press it. He doesn't even think of coming near it, but the piston door on the other end of the Final Control room opens on its own, and he flinches hard when he sees a masked man walk out of there, wielding an axe.

"Dream?" Tommy croaks.

He takes a step back as Dream drags his axe on the floor, the porcelain mask smiling sinisterly. "It's your time to die, Tommy," he says.

Tommy turns around sharply and bolts. He reaches a staircase and sees light coming in from the exit outside. Tommy makes a run for it, skipping two steps at once. *Just a little longer*, his breath hitches, and he will get away. *Just a little longer*, his heart pummels his ribs, and he will be safe from Dream.

He jumps into the light with a yelp of relief. White flashes in front of his eyes, and he ends up on a painfully familiar bridge. Tommy stares at his hands clenching a bow, and the L'manburg uniform he is wearing, stained dark red where blood barely dried around his stomach. This isn't right. Wasn't he in the Final Control room just a second ago?

"Theseus," someone says, and Tommy's head shoots up, meeting eyes with Technoblade aiming at him with a loaded crossbow on the other end of the bridge.

"Techno," he chuckles nervously, raising his hands. His bow falls on the ground with a loud clatter. "Put the weapon down, we can talk about this – "

Technoblade shoots, and Tommy chokes as his chest bursts with agonizing pain. He grabs the arrow where it sticks half-way out between his ribs, feeling tears swelling his eyes. Blood flows freely out of the wound, no matter how hard he presses his hands into it.

Techno makes his way over to him. Tommy sways and stumbles over his own foot. Techno catches him by the collar of his shirt, and he can see the cold crimson gaze behind the skull mask.

“Please,” Tommy whispers.

“You should have died like a hero when you had the chance to,” Technoblade says, and throws him off the bridge.

All air is knocked out of him upon the impact with the surface of the ocean. Salt water burns his eyes and the wound in his chest when he finally manages to get the arrow out. Tommy jerks up with the last bits of strength left in his body.

Just as he is about to break the surface and gasp for air, something grabs him by his ankle and drags him back down. “The brat’s finally gone,” Phil says, tilting his head.

Tommy jerks away and tries to kick the avian in the face when another hand catches his foot. He snaps to look at it only to see Niki baring sharp teeth as she grins, “Good riddance.”

“We should have killed him ages ago,” Jack agrees.

Tommy stares in horror as more and more hands start grabbing him, bony fingers clutching onto his clothes and hair. He thrashes hard when he recognizes Wilbur in one of the empty pale faces.

“I missed you, Tommy,” Wilbur says, voice echoing. “It’s time for you to reunite with your brother.”

He can do nothing but watch as people drag him down and down, towards the bottom of the ocean, and just as the darkness is about to embrace him, Tommy *screams*.

And then he wakes up.

Tommy’s eyes shot open, free wing flapping against the wall of his box nest, and as his brain starts registering the ache that flares with a particularly harsh beat, it dawns on him that he is no longer drowning. His chest burns with pain, but when he ruffles the feathers with his beak, he finds no arrows there, just a faint scar of a wound that has healed months and months ago.

Even as Tommy scratches one of his feet with the claws of the other, it’s hard to pull himself out of the fog in his brain. Calm down, Tommy tells himself. That was a nightmare, just a stupid dream.

The room is full of shadows, moving and alive, dancing around the beam of moonlight creeping into the house through the half-open curtains. Tommy imagines faces staring and whispering at him from the dark and comes to a bitter conclusion that he won’t be able to fall asleep tonight.

He could go to Phil. Tommy knows that nightmares plague him less when he is with other people. His first urge is to cling to a corner and call for the avian; a pitiful, high whine merely escapes his throat before he forcefully presses it down.

It’s not right that he clings to the avian so much. After the Syndicate meeting, Tommy expected himself to hate Phil, but he just... Can’t. Something about him speaks of familiarity and safety and even when Tommy avoids him, he still craves the other’s silent company.

Even now, when he hears movement upstairs, and Phil comes climbing down the ladder, he fights against the voice in his head that pleads for him to run towards the man. Tommy stays in his nest as he hears steps approaching, and a mildly concerned face peeks into the box, blinking sleepily.

“Hey, mate,” Phil says. “Did something spook you?”

Tommy stays silent. Doesn’t even blink or breathe. Just stares at Phil with wide eyes and internally counts seconds before he is left alone.

“I bet you had a nightmare,” the avian continues nonchalantly. He sits down on the floor. Tommy can barely see his face from this angle, but he can hear the casual and soft tone of his voice. “I couldn’t sleep much tonight, too.”

Phil looks at something to his right. Tommy doesn’t need to follow his gaze to know that it’s Wilbur’s portrait on the wall he is staring at.

“Sometimes he comes to me in my dreams to remind me how much I have failed him,” Phil murmurs, and Tommy squirms uncomfortably in his nest. Even though they are the only living souls in the room, it feels as though he is overhearing a deeply private conversation.

Tommy doesn’t have to put up with the feeling for much longer, because the avian turns to him again and slowly extends a hand.

“You want to come with me upstairs for the night?” Phil asks.

Tommy wants to reach back to him. He really, *really* does. But Tommy doesn’t need Phil’s fucking pity and nor does he need his comfort. It takes all of his willpower for him to stiffen and retreat deeper into his nest.

“Alright,” Phil says, and Tommy ducks his head and turns away so he doesn’t have to see the avian’s sad eyes.

A few hours later, morning comes. Tommy falls into his usual routine, and by that he means he finds a warm corner to sit at and stare out of the window in the distance.

Phil is on the other side of the room, carefully pulling out glass bottles from a chest, only to start putting them back down again in a different order for reorganization. Tommy isn’t even surprised that he can’t recognize the potions by their colors – just adds another note to a mental list of things he had already forgotten.

A few days ago, this discovery would have probably sent him into another angry fit, but now it doesn’t stir enough of his emotions for him to even twitch a feather, and he distinctly recalls someone (was it Puffy? Ranboo? Someone completely different?) telling him that feeling numb is not a good sign.

I’m not numb, Tommy argues. And, if he really thinks of it, he’s not doing that bad. Tommy is alright. He has food, company, and nobody’s actively trying to kill him. It’s not terrible, it’s not amazing. It’s just... simply alright.

It doesn’t mean Tommy doesn’t miss being a human. He’d never think that there would be a day when he’d regret not appreciating his own body – oh hey, there is truly a first for everything in his life – but it’s not like he can do anything about it.

Tommy is prepared to spend another day in the sluggish fog permanently residing in his head when there is an indistinguishable noise outside that startles both him and Phil.

The crow watches from the corner of his vision as the avian walks over to the window and opens it –

Oh shit, Phil opens the window!

Tommy throws himself onto the chest and climbs the sill in a matter of seconds with his heart pounding madly against his ribs. This is his chance. If he can get past Phil before he shuts the window, he might have a chance of an escape.

“Freedom!” he cries out, ducking under Phil’s arm and –

“CAW!” a ball of black feathers slumps onto the sill, startling Tommy and almost making him fall to the floor. His unbound wing shoots out for balance, claws digging into wood as he lets out a *manly* screech of terror.

What is *this*?

Well, he can quite clearly see that it is a fat crow. *Look* – Tommy is not trying to body shame, but the crow seems like a giant next to him, and that is just straight up illegal. He can’t help but fluff up his feathers to try and appear at least a tad bit more threatening. Which doesn’t mean he is afraid. It totally doesn’t.

Just as Tommy stops screaming, two more black birds land onto the sill – one with lighter, almost grey plumage, and the other one missing an eye – and now there are three ugly feathered bitches staring at him, completely blocking out the window with their bodies.

Hostile territory takeover? Organized gang attack? Not on Tommy’s watch.

“Die!” he launches himself at the nearest crow, only for something to catch him mid-air, his claws slicing air an inch away from the enemy’s face.

Phil scruffs Tommy like a misbehaving cat as he frantically beats his wing and tries to whirl around to peck the avian’s hand. “Sheesh. Be nice to your new playmates.”

Tommy immediately stops squirming and stares at Phil with wide eyes. On the sill, birds share a look that seems all too-close to one of disbelief and horror. All four crows in the room have the same question plastered over their opened beaks.

“What do you mean, playmates?!”

The entire scenario unraveling in Phil's house heavily resembles a 'parents forcing their children to play with the weird neighbor kid' kind of situation, with the important note that Tommy is the weird kid.

He doesn't think it's weird to avoid the crows when they approach him, however. Again, Tommy isn't scared. He is just wary. Which you can't blame him for, considering Phil's Chat literally hunted him on the day he respawned.

The avian went downstairs to do something in the basement – closing the trapdoor behind himself, the prick – leaving Tommy alone with the three crows. He thinks Phil has mentioned the birds’ names to

him, but he completely zoned out of it, and honestly? He doesn't care.

It does become an issue when one of the crows gathers enough courage to take a few jumps closer to Tommy, curiously tilting his head, and he can't even cuss him out by a proper name.

"Hey, grey crow, you are a bitch!" just doesn't ring it at all.

Wait a minute, that's a brilliant idea!

"Fuck off, Bitch," Tommy hisses, internally feeling like a fucking *genius*.

The other two crows, the bulky and the single eyed one, who he names Prick and Pussy respectively, obviously don't take any clues, because they come closer, too. Tommy finds himself retreating into his nest backwards but freezes when Pussy trills quietly at him.

It's like Phil's calming purrs, but the voice is even smoother, washing over Tommy in a relaxing wave. His previously puffed-up feathers slowly fall flat against his body, a questioning chirp falling from his mouth against his will.

Pussy caws. It sounds almost... friendly. Tommy is bound to one place, not sure if he should recoil or approach the other crow. Pussy makes the decision for him, moving over and calming him down with the thrills all the way until they are just a few steps apart from each other.

Tommy cowers in the face of the larger bird, but his instincts are doing that strange thing again where they completely take over his body. The spell is broken when Prick flaps his wings, and he springs back with a strangled squeak.

Pussy makes a sad noise at him, one that almost makes him want to approach again. Tommy doesn't, glaring warily as the one-eyed crow growls at Prick in what sounds like an accusing tone. Prick hisses at Pussy in response, and they stare at each other for a few moments until the larger one lunges at his opponent, and a fight breaks out.

Oh, this is *fun*.

They roll on the ground, claws interlocked, and Tommy jumps out of the way to avoid getting crushed. One of the crows gets the upper hand, pinning the other to the floor, only for the other to whip around and peck his neck.

It's hard to tell them apart in the chaos of choked screams and flying feathers, so Tommy cheers for one crow and then for the other like he's a spectator on a wrestling match. In the midst of this, he only remembers the presence of the third crow when something fast and grey knocks him down on the floor.

Oh no. Oh fuck. Tommy has places to see and women to meet, he cannot get killed so easily and stupidly. "PHIIIIIIIL," Tommy yells, "HELP! I'm too young to die, Phi-"

He gets slapped with a wing, and the weight crushing him down disappears. Tommy shots up, blinking confusedly. Bitch is running away from him like he wasn't trying to fucking murder him just a second ago. He freezes at the other end of the room, however, right in front of the chest, and looks at Tommy expectantly.

"What do you want, you bitch, Bitch?"

Bitch shakes his head up and down and flaps his wings loudly. The grey crow almost looks like he is... teasing him?

“You’ve got to be kidding me,” Tommy gasps. “Are you trying to play fucking tag with me?”

He takes an experimental step forward, and the crow immediately jumps away a little further. Excitement flares in Tommy’s veins. “Alright,” he chirps, grinning internally, “You’re on.”

Bitch turns to be a fast... well, bitch. Tommy takes it as a personal offense that he hasn’t managed to catch him in the first few seconds and makes sure to inform the entire room of it by yelling profanities on top of his lungs – if Bad was here, he would probably fall dead from a fucking heart attack.

Tommy is halfway through his personal mental dictionary of swears when Bitch manages to duck away from directly under his nose. Apparently, physics work for crows, too, because Tommy can’t curse out the momentum to cease its existence and finds himself rapidly approaching an obstacle in the face of two fighting crows.

“BALLS!” he cries out, slamming into Pussy and Prick, sending all three of them rolling on the floor until they meet a wall and fall apart into a messy pile of feathers and limbs.

Someone is crushing his good wing. Tommy kicks the crow and receives a startled yelp from Pussy. Prick growls at him from where he was unlucky to get his head pinned by the fledging’s butt.

There are a lot of snaps and hisses and pecks before they manage to untangle themselves apart. If Phil was in the room, he would probably think they got collectively struck by a lightning; at this point the only normal looking crow in the room is Bitch, who observes them from the top of a chest, shaking in a soundless laugh.

An idea crosses Tommy’s mind. “Prick and Pussy,” he solemnly announces, “Fellow crows. Brothers in humiliation. Comrades. I suggest we temporarily set our differences aside to team up against the common enemy, the one impostor among us who hasn’t suffered yet.”

The two crows share a look of understanding before cawing at Tommy, synchronized. Three heads snap in Bitch’s direction, and he chokes on his own laughter, finally sensing the danger looming over him.

Oh well. It’s already too late. “Fetch,” Tommy commands, and the room bursts into chaos.

The skirmish results in four disheveled crows that look more like blobs of ink than actual birds. Tommy is pretty sure he has more feathers facing the wrong direction than he has feathers in general. It’s physically impossible and absolutely illogical, but he has no other explanation to why the fuck they itch so much.

Despite all that, Tommy feels good. He is reluctant to call the warmth blooming in his chest to be happiness just yet, but it’s the closest he got to it ever since his respawn as a crow. Tommy laughs, a crystal-clear sound, so human and not at the same time, and two voices join in cheerful caws.

Pussy suddenly buttheads him; at least Tommy thinks that is what he is trying to do, until he feels a sharp beak prickling his wing.

Tommy yelps and jumps away, "What the fuck are you doing?"

Pussy straightens and tilts his head to the side. He throws a look behind himself, where Prick walks over to Bitch and does the same what he did with Tommy's wing. The grey crow fluffs up his feathers as the other's beak ruffles through them, closing his eyes.

Tommy... Tommy doesn't understand what's happening. Is Bitch in pain? Is this some kind of torture?

Pussy lets out a long rumbling thrill and it downs on Tommy that he *enjoys* it.

Reluctantly, Tommy lets Pussy come close again. He chirps surprisedly from the sensation of a beak sliding through his feathers, delicate yet confident in practiced, smooth movements.

Feathers click back into place. Broken ones get pulled out gently together with pieces of dirt and dust stuck between them. The itching previously annoying Tommy disappears, and a feeling disperses through his body, light and tickling and *amazing*.

Oh *f-fuck*. Why does this feel so fucking *good*?

"Witchcraft," Tommy declares as he all but slumps to the floor, receiving a cackling caw from Pussy.

His brain feels like it had been melted, and thoughts drag in it at a snail's pace. Preening, he then realizes, that's what this thing is called. Tommy thought there is nothing in this world more enjoyable than head scratches, but he never had wings to get preened like this before. He hasn't felt so calm and relaxed and safe ever since Wilbur -

Ever since -

Tommy internally frowns, trying to focus on the faint feeling, a fire lit up in the middle of a blizzard. It keeps slipping away from Tommy's vision even as he chases it with growing uneasiness. It seems like he is forgetting something. Something very important.

And then there is a second crow - Bitch, he thinks sluggishly – joining in to preen him and Tommy *melts*, and the worry just seems too insignificant and unnecessarily complicated and he lets it dissolve, turn into background noise, too quiet to disturb the steady cooing of satisfaction that rumbles in his throat.

Yes. YEEEEES. Tommy sounds like an evil maniac in his own head, while in reality, he is laying, defeated, on the floor, with drowsiness clogging his eyelids.

He never felt this good before, he concluded.

This is obviously some bird shit going on with his brain, but Tommy finds that he doesn't mind it that much. After almost two weeks of pure struggle, he deserves this little bit of leisure, and he is going to let himself fucking enjoy it.

With shared effort, Pussy and Bitch get his feathers fixed in just a few minutes. Even Prick joins in at the end to give him a quick peck at the head. Tommy whines when the crows pull away, already craving for the loss of the wonderful feeling.

"Don't laugh at me," he grumps when he sees the crows share amused looks with sparkles in their eyes. Tommy buttheads Pussy for a good measure and flaps his good wing.

"Alright, lads," he announces. "Time for real fun."

If Tommy is eventually going to lose all his memories, he needs to make good use of them while they're present. And what is the one thing that he could teach the crows? What could become Tommy's last and ultimate legacy?

The answer is, *hard drugs*.

Tommy's eyes fall on a potion, one glass bottle filled with pinkish liquid that Phil seemingly forgot to put away into a chest. He can't recognize which potion it is, but he is pretty sure that it's not poison. Like, ninety-five percent sure.

And if he's wrong, well... Tommy eyes the crows and recounts them again. Phil's probably not going to notice one of them missing.

The glass bottle shatters to the ground. Among all the noises that the crows have already made it's the one that finally alerts Phil. Tommy freezes when he hears him climbing the ladder. Oh shit. Oh fuck. They need to hide before the avian catches them on the crime scene.

"SCATTER!" Tommy yells.

Startled by the sudden sound, the crows soar into the air. Bitch crashes into the window. Pussy collides with the lid of an open chest, and it falls, sealing him shut inside. Prick is the luckiest among three as he merely gets knocked over by Tommy when the trapdoor opens, and he tries to bolt away from the wide-eyed Phil peeking into the room.

"What the fuck?" the avian asks.

Phil doesn't risk leaving Tommy alone with the crows again, and they mess around for a few more hours before it comes time for them to leave.

Bitch and Prick leap for the open window, but Pussy stops to put a beak on top of his head for a moment before following suit.

"Thank you," Phil says, "See you tomorrow, ladies."

Ladies?

Tommy has been with women this entire time?!

The crows caw and take the sky almost at the same time. Tommy throws himself at the window just as Phil closes it shut in front of his face.

"*NOOO!*" he cries out. "*Women, come back!*"

In the evening, Phil prepares for sleep. Before leaving to his bedroom upstairs, however, he casually drops his hat on the floor upside-down.

Tommy waits until the avian is out of his sight before going to inspect it.

Crows must be cats' third cousins or some shit because his first instinct is to climb inside. Tommy finds the hat surprisingly comfortable, just the right size for him to fit into it fully and leave some

space for the future... improvements.

He contemplates looking around for feathers scattered around the room from his preening earlier, or maybe he'll assault the couch pillow again to pull out the filling for his future nest. One thing Tommy knows for sure: Phil has made the biggest mistake in his life, because he is never getting this hat back.

Chapter End Notes

(This chapter has some problems with formatting on mobile devices. I don't know how to fix it but if you do please tell in the comments)

Shoutout to Ribbon for beta-reading this chapter!

Also shoutout to Mellodi for helping with the hurt/angst part as some of her suggestions and bits for chapter 5 and 6 have made their way into here, too.

If you have enjoyed reading, don't forget to leave a kuddo and/or comment. Also check if you're subscribed, because sometimes people (including myself) forget to do that and then get confused about why they're not receiving update emails :D

Fun fact: this chapter was supposed to be longer but I split out the plans for it and moved some stuff into chapter 7 because this one was already getting quiet long.

Fun fact 2: Bitch, Pussy and Prick are a reference to the Trauma Trio from my time/dimensional fic, [It's not kidnapping if he is us](#). If you have read it already, you can try to guess which one is which.

Flight and flock

Chapter Summary

Phil comes in. Tommy's rant comes to an abrupt end when a second person enters the house.

"You're still keeping the bird to yourself?" Techno says, taking his cape off and hanging it on the hook by the door.

"Only for a few more days," Phil says. He crouches in front of Tommy and extends a hand to him – that's normally his offer for the fledgling to hop onto it.

Tommy bites him instead. "Fuck off. You didn't tell me we're going to have guests today," Tommy grumps as Phil inspects the drop of blood where the crow's beak tore through the skin. Techno eyes the whole scene indifferently, so he makes sure to puff up his feathers and glare at the man angrily. "And especially, not *him*."

"I swear, there wasn't a single day where he would wake up in the morning and not choose violence," Phil says, standing up.

"Have you named him yet?" Techno asks. "If not, Menace is a good option."

Phil laughs. "You're not that off from the truth. I call him a little shit, mostly, but don't want to give an actual name yet, since he is likely to leave permanently soon."

"You'll get attached," Techno hums.

Phil nods, "I'm afraid that I already am."

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Things go a bit better in the next few days.

Phil does try to get his hat back; first by kindly asking for it, then by coaxing him to trade it for peanuts, and when that doesn't work either, by straight up snatching it.

Luckily, Bitch, Prick and Pussy came to the rescue, cawing at Phil. Pussy – who has some sort of grudge against the avian, it seems – even manages to get a clear headshot on him.

"What the fuck. You were supposed to be on my side!"

While Phil contemplates all his life choices, rubbing the spot where a beak rammed into his forehead, Tommy quickly grabs the peanuts he dropped on the floor.

"I'm going to take that, thank you." He flops down into his hat-nest and settles in there, drowning in the soft feathers the three crows from Chat have insisted on stuffing it with. Phil stares at him with a deadpan look, and Tommy adds, for a good measure, "Fuck you."

That's how Tommy spends most of his time: annoying the living fuck out of Phil, sometimes on his own, sometimes with his three new friends. Yes, he decides to assign that status to them after it has become apparent that crows do not understand what a girlfriend is.

More than that, Tommy has a lingering suspicion that Chat is trying to babysit him. Or at least that is what Phil intended them to do when he first let them into the house. Tommy is deeply offended by that realization, so he offends Phil back, by taking his Chat and turning it into his own personal army of chaos.

No, that is not a pot with water you wanted to make a soup with. That is their personal swimming pool and you can do anything about it, bitch. Tommy even makes the sacrifice of getting his feathers soaking wet just so he can roll around the couch. He throws Phil the best smirk he can muster and relishes in the way the avian facepalms and sighs, defeated, on the other side of the room.

The avian doesn't look mad at him, however. Phil scolds him lightly, shooing him away if he is being too bold, but mostly allows him to get away with whatever shenanigans he comes up with each time. Tommy has no other explanation for that other than that the avian has been worried about him, and he is happy that the crow fledgling is back to his normal chaotic – and shitty behaving – self.

It doesn't mean that he has come to terms with his situation. Tommy suffers from the same repeating nightmare – of being chased, shot and drowned – every night, and he is frankly aware of the growing blankness in his head he wakes up with each time. It's just he has something, or rather, someone, to distract him from the sticky feeling of fear permanently living deep inside of him.

Besides, Tommy has something to look forward to now. The two weeks' time has passed, and the bandages on his wing have been removed permanently. Tommy flaps the appendage, sighing in relief at the absence of the searing pain. It feels weird to be able to feel air between the feathers of that wing, and his muscles are stiff from disuse, too. Phil notices his stiff movements and reassures him that it's going to be back to normal with some exercising.

Tommy can't have nice things in his life. He doesn't get immediately released into the wild like he was hoping to be, so he spends half an hour on the windowsill, pouting and muttering angrily under his breath.

"Mate, stop being so dramatic," Phil says to him. "You don't even know how to fly properly and won't survive a day out there on your own."

After what had to be the hundredth swear thrown in Phil's address he finally admits that he might have a point. Tommy doesn't only not know how to fly *properly*; he can't fly *at all*.

He can, theoretically, walk his way over to Snowchester. He also can theoretically fall off a high place, get stomped on, eaten by a predator in the forest surrounding the commune... And the list goes on. If Tommy dies soon, he wants to do that in his own body, and not in a way as stupid as drowning in deep snow.

So, flying it is. After all, how hard can it be?

Turns out, *very* hard.

Tommy doesn't understand what he's doing wrong. It seems so basic in words: jump, spread your wings and flap them to propel yourself into the air. Maybe it's the matter of balance, or there is more than way to flap your wings – whatever is the cause, Tommy does not propel himself into the air but mostly into furniture.

After he gets very closely acquainted with a working furnace, Phil decides to let him practice flight upstairs. Even with the giant bed obscuring most of the room and the rest of the floor covered in pillows and blankets to soften his falls Tommy still always manages to find a way to slam into something hard.

He complains and whines with every bad attempt, and Phil has to convince him to give it another try. Tommy would keep doing it nevertheless – he wants to get out of here, after all – but he loves peanuts. Peanuts are *great*. He does not care about the neck pets the avian gives him. He hates them, actually, and merely tolerates them because he... because it feels *nice* –

You know what? Scratch that. He just tolerates them out of the kindness of his heart, period.

One of these days, Phil leaves the house again. Tommy lets him go alone, without him, only because the avian swore that he'll be back in ten minutes. The fledgling sits by the front door the entire time, staring at it even when he hears Pussy calling for him to play together.

Tommy hears steps outside when it's thirteen seconds past the promised ten minutes and puts on his best angry look. "You're late, so I have the right to demand peanuts," he announces even before the door opens fully. "And also pets." The realization settles in, "oh fuck, no I don't, I didn't say that, you heard nothing –"

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"You'll get attached," Techno hums.

Phil nods, "I'm afraid that I already am."

Something in Tommy's heart flutters at these words. A shy feeling that warms him up and brings fragile hope that he doesn't know he wants to put faith in yet. He reminds himself that he is mad at Phil for bringing Techno into the house, so he looks away from the fond glance the avian throws him – even if it is physically painful to ignore the desire to let out a happy chirp – and the two friends leave for the kitchen.

Tommy lingers in the doorway for a bit. He can see Phil preparing tea. Tommy would usually join him and then curl up next to the steaming mug, cawing angrily each time the avian would try to raise

it, effectively preventing him from getting a single sip until the drink becomes lukewarm and tasteless.

Phil tried to find a compromise by pouring hot water into another mug – but to no effort, the crow always goes for the one he is currently drinking from. Tommy felt his own joy rise with each inch that the avian's brows raised he realized that the crow was doing it on purpose. After all, what's the point in his own pleasure if he doesn't make others suffer with it?

This time, however, the second mug of tea is put into Techno's hands. That, for some reason, makes Tommy mad. He can't even drink from that mug, so why does his veins feel like they are burning with rage?

You're jealous, the inner voice tells him. Tommy contemplates flipping it off, but maybe, for a moment, he does consider that possibility. Who do people usually feel jealous of? Family and friends, mostly. Tommy has to admit Phil falls under the second category. It's not like there is someone else in his head to snitch on him to the rest of the world. Tommy doesn't have a lot of friends these days, anyway, only Phil and Chat.

Speaking of Chat, where are Bitch, Prick and Pussy?

A caw sounding somewhere above Tommy brings his attention to the three crows grouped up on top of one of the ceiling beams.

“What the fuck?”

On day two of their acquaintance Tommy made a discovery that each of the crows sound differently, much like humans and their voices. Whether he didn't listen close enough before or the ability to tell the birds apart was one of the things that came in with the respawn glitch, he doesn't know, but it comes in handy when he one of the crows caw at him teasingly and he recognizes Prick's low rumble.

If that's not a challenge, then Tommy does not know what is. Phil has a weird taste in decorating his house, and there are sprouting veins covering one of the inner walls of the room. They make an okay ladder for Tommy to climb on, and he soon settles next to the other crows.

Prick gets a quick peck from Tommy for teasing him and a more painful one from Bitch when he tries to peck him back. Pussy steps forward before a fight could emerge. The mother of the group, as Tommy had noted her to be, only proves her title by immediately starting to preen the fledgling.

Maybe ten feet into the air, on the very edge of a wooden beam is not the best place to relax at, but Tommy can't help the way his brain seems to just melt from the sensation. He doesn't hold back the chirps and coos that keep making his way out of his throat.

The one-eyed crow makes a sound. A new one, that Tommy has never heard before. He doesn't even know what it means but it's barely audible and gentle and makes his brain go completely blank, save for a single thought that pounds in it, *flock?*

Tommy does not know what flock is. And then he suddenly does – *family*. Family, flock, it's the same thing in two different words, both of which makes him freeze and want to cry on the spot. Is this what Tommy thinks it is? Is Pussy offering him to be a part of her flock?

Tommy didn't have a family ever since Wilbur died, or maybe even for a longer time, but he cannot quite recall anything except for the smell of gunpowder, sunken eyes and whispers bouncing off stone walls. He attempted to cling to people after that, many times, and the only thing he remembers from that is the pain of getting betrayed.

Birds may not be the smartest at times but they don't know what sides are. They won't exile you, or destroy your home and cheer at your funeral or plunge a sword into your guts to the destructive melody of the explosions in the background.

Crows don't lie to you. They don't hurt you. They can't stab you in the back with a knife. Crows can't even *hold* knives – Tommy would know, he checked that himself.

Crows are not humans. And that is the problem.

Tommy must remember that he is *not* a crow. He is human. And a human cannot get fucking *adopted* by a crow.

Pussy tilts her head questioningly at him, but she must have read Tommy's answer from the way he shrieks into himself and forces his feathers to fall flat against his body. She makes a little sad sound. Tommy feels like an asshole and almost opens his beak to take his answer back but then Pussy nudges him gently, as if telling him that it is alright, and jumps off the beam.

The crow glides down to the floor with elegance that Tommy can't even dream of. Prick follows her a moment later, circling the room a few times before landing the showoff. "You two make it look too easy," he says.

They call him from down there in what was supposed to be a reassuring way but Tommy does not find anything reassuring in the height he is now stuck at. The perspective of climbing the veins back down while having to see the emptiness below himself doesn't attract him much. Tommy has never been afraid of height. Fuck, he isn't afraid of it now, either, but falling off a cliff and breaking your wing in the process does teach you a thing or two about being careful near high places.

"PHIIIIIIIL," he whines, high and loud. "He-elp!"

Tommy waits ten seconds. Then a minute and another one. It becomes apparent that Phil isn't going to come to his aid – right, he is too busy talking to his best friend Technoblade. Tommy clicks his beak. Whatever. He is not jealous and he doesn't need anyone's help, anyway.

He scouts over closer to the edge and bends over it. The living room is sprawled fully under his feet. Best case, Tommy flies over the other crows' heads, showing how pog and big of a man he is, worst case – he goes down like a rock to the bottom of the ocean. Fuck this. Tommy wants to live another day and he isn't going to *jump* –

In his contemplations he forgets about the third crow still sitting beside him. Tommy thought of changing Bitch's name because, crow or human, it didn't feel right to call a woman a bitch. Turns out, he was not wrong in his initial judgement, because she rams into him head-first, and he falls off the edge.

Tommy's wings shoot open out of instinct. He doesn't know what he is doing and neither does his body because he twirls in the air in shapes that should not be physically possible. One of his wings spins around madly like a rotor blade and the other one might as well as not be there.

Luck must have been on his side today. Tommy does not slam into a wall but flies through the open door and into the kitchen.

"- planning to see Sam soon – *what the fuck?*"

Whatever conversation Phil and Techno comes to a halt when the monstrosity of black feathers and wide blue eyes comes spinning into the room. Tommy belatedly realizes that he had been suffering in silence this entire time so he completes the horror movie screamer by letting out a terrified screech.

If the frequency of his shouting will not break the glass windows, then Tommy himself fucking will because he is nearing one very fast *and* –

Techno catches him mid-crash, easily, like a baseball.

Tommy all but slumps in his hands, still disoriented from the crazy flight, and once his vision stops swimming, the first thing he sees is the deadpan look on the man's face.

"Hi, bitch," Tommy caws.

"Phil, I think you have overlooked a major safety hazard," Techno says.

He is surprisingly gentle as he hands him over to Phil. Tommy blinks sheepishly as the avian runs a finger down his head. "That is called a fledgling bird in flight training," Phil says.

Techno huffs, "It doesn't seem like you're a very good teacher."

Phil puts Tommy down on the dining table. Tommy shakes his wings and tail, ruffling up his feathers to make them lay back down properly. All of Pussy's hard work preening him has been ruined but he is pretty sure Chat won't mind fixing him up again later.

"Well," Phil hums, "It's not like I can demonstrate to him how to do it properly."

Tommy feels as though the temperature in the room drops a couple degrees. Twinkling sparks of amusement in Techno's eyes die out. He puts his elbows on the table, and the next time he speaks, his voice holds a tinder tone of sympathy that Tommy doesn't remember ever hearing from him before, "Shouldn't your wing be healed by now?"

Phil shakes his head with a smile that doesn't reach his eyes. "If my feathers didn't grow back after the molt, they are not going to, ever."

Tommy doesn't understand what they are talking about; what he can do is see the heavy fog that settles in Phil's eyes. He shifts weight from foot to another, but can't bring himself to turn away from that sad look on the avian's face. Phil had cheered him up when he felt downbeat after the Syndicate meeting, so it's only fair that he returns the favor back.

He hops over to the avian and lightly bumps his head against the knuckles of his hand. "You're sad," Tommy says, "and I won't stand for it. Do I need to fight someone? I can bite or peck them for you, if you want."

Phil's smile turns genuine and Tommy beams together with it. This time, when the hand is offered to him, the crow jumps over to it, careful not to scratch the skin with his sharp claws. Phil puts him down on his shoulder. Tommy picks on the avian's ear, just a bit, so that life wouldn't seem too easy to him.

"You know what?" Techno says out of a sudden, a smirk tugging at his lips. "Grab your trident, Phil, we're going to have a race."

He is pretty sure Techno meant to race against Phil and Phil only, but one, the avian is not allowed to leave him alone, two, Tommy is up for anything that breaks Techno's plans and gets on his nerves.

Phil demonstrates the trident flight to him not once, but thrice. Tommy watches him land the third time, netherite boots splashing the puddle of water he landed in, and muses if doing things just to make others suffer was not that good of an idea.

He remembers a few other members carrying Riptide tridents – or, simply speaking, the spinney flying forks – around but not if he used one himself before. Who knows, maybe Tommy has some sort of allergy to tridents. Or phobia. Though phobia would mean that Tommy is afraid of something which he is not, so an allergy it is.

“You coming?” Phil asks.

Tommy eyes the trident in his hands like it's a ticking bomb. “You do realize that this might kill me?” he says. “And that my death is going to be on your hands?”

Techno looks mildly bored, fiddling with the loose end of his braid. “This is my first time seeing a bird that is afraid of heights,” he says. “Seriously, Phil, just leave him be. We're burning daylight here.”

Tommy snaps at him, “Fuck you, I'm not afraid of anything.”

If Tommy does something the best, it is when he does something out of spite. In the absence of a middle finger or fingers as a whole, proving Techno wrong is the closest thing he can do to flipping him off.

So, he hops onto Phil's extended palm and tries to soothe down the rising panic as the avian secures him against his chest with one hand and readjusts his grip on the trident with the other, “You drop me, and I'm going to peck your eyes out.”

Phil and Techno both step into the pond down to their ankles. Trident glow faintly when their dull ends touch the freezing water, indicating that they are ready for the first dash. Techno falls into a stance, giving Phil and Tommy, trembling – from the cold, mind you, and not from the fear – an amused side-look. “I can bring my cape and put it on to make it even.”

Phil rolls his eyes. “That cape is like the second skin to you. Besides, we both know that you're not that keen on playing things fair.”

Techno smirks, a bright red spark lighting up in his eyes. “You're right. I'm not.”

And he takes off flying, water exploding under his feet. Phil swings his own trident with a second-long delay. Tommy braces himself, closing his eyes shut, and then all air is knocked out of him at once.

He can feel them soaring into the sky. Wind whistles and pops in his ears in a series of harsh slaps. Tommy's insides churn and spin and he's pretty sure that his stomach makes a backflip at some point.

Tommy is going to die here, if not from a fall, then from a heart attack. The only reason he isn't screaming yet is because his tongue feels like it got glued to his palate. Right when Tommy thinks that it couldn't get any worse than that, they reach the highest point and start falling back down.

FUUUUUCK!

Phil is laughing. He is enjoying this.

Tommy is not laughing. He is not enjoying this at all.

He hates every single moment of the flight and he didn't sign up for this and he wants to go back to the ground please put him back –

Right on que, they land into the next pond: a few water droplets splash Tommy's feathers, but it's the last thing he cares about. Phil – and the crow, consequently, too – are not weightless anymore, there is *ground* under the avian's feet. Earth. Dirt. His beloved. Tommy doesn't want to leave it ever again.

He opens his eyes only to see that Phil is swinging his trident. Survival instincts kick in and he gets ahold of his voice, "WAIT, NO- "

Too late. They are flying through the thin cold air again. Tommy's eyes are wide open this time. He can see the sky ahead. Phil's ugly chin, too, in the awkward position he is held in, but mostly the white clouds floating leisurely over the blue canvas.

It's terrifying.

But it's also beautiful, and not actually... that bad?

Tommy breathes in. It feels like air is prickling his lungs at first but it flows in and out freely as his chest rises and falls in a thundering steady rhythm. The wind isn't slapping him anymore and he finds it easy to withstand it when he faces forward with his sharp beak – cutting through the air like a knife through freshly fallen snow.

Before he knows it, Tommy wrestles one of his wings out of Phil's hold. It's not the smartest thing to do when he could fall to his death at any moment but something inside of him demands him to do it, primal and instinctual and *strong*.

The free wing – the previously broken one – is spread wide open. Air flows above and below it. Tommy can feel the way it slides off his feathers. It's a magical sensation that he relishes in every inch of his body. Phil lands another pond, and Tommy almost cheers when they soar into the air again.

They reach another peak. Tommy flaps his wings, not out of necessity but simply because that is the only way he can let out the tenth portion of joy that threatens to overflow and tear through his chest. He isn't sure whether Phil lets him go or he manages to squirm out of the avian's hand, but there is nothing holding him back anymore and he feels himself falling.

Tommy waits for the crush that never comes. One gut-twisting moment of fright – a beat of his wings – and he is thrown upwards by the lift. Haphazardly flapping wings sync in with each other and now he is not just gliding but flying so naturally like it is something he did for his entire life.

Well. Maybe he did exaggerate that a bit. Clumsy, thrown around like a leaf on the wind, Tommy is probably a huge danger in the skies – but he couldn't care less. He is fucking flying. Dancing with the air in a pattern that he doesn't see but feels with his soul and follows with his entire body, almost like he was *born* for flight but hasn't known that, until now.

Tips of his feathers brush against something and Tommy panics a bit before he realizes that it is Phil: one of his wings, spread wide like his are, the cloak flapping up and down on them with the wind. They are so close to each other Tommy can feel the way air twirls as it passes between the avian's feathers.

“Phil, I’m flying!” he screams.

He hears Phil chuckle. The two pairs of shining blue eyes meet each other, and Tommy sees the understanding in every little crease of his laughing face. Phil looks at him proudly and it feels almost as good as the flight itself.

Tommy belatedly realizes that the avian is still reliant on the trident when the charge on it dies out. Phil’s fall is mostly straight and fast, his wings folded back as he lands into the water next to Techno. Tommy is still up high in the skies when both men dash up. He barely has the time to flap his wings and get a bit of height in time to avoid getting hit by Techno, “Watch the fuck where you’re going!”

He can see, in the distance, an obsidian frame darkening in the snow. Phil and have Techno agreed that the first person to get to the Nether portal and return back to the cottages is going to win the race. And oh well, Tommy is technically a person too, isn’t he?

Once an idea enters his mind it’s impossible to get rid of. Tommy still remembers the Syndicate meeting – his memory loss problem only affects the things that happened before his last respawn but nothing that came afterwards – the pain is here and it will stay, pushed away only temporarily, until Tommy manages to somehow let it out.

He can’t shout away these emotions for the absence of anyone to understand it, he can’t attack or fight the cause either. So Tommy molds that anger into energy that he uses to burn as he flaps his wings and pushes himself over the limit, ignorant of the soreness in his muscles and more and more frequent hitches of his breath.

His flight is superior. While Phil and Techno hop up and down like cockroaches, Tommy follows a fairly straight path forward. They only manage to catch up with him around the portal and only because he realizes that he doesn’t know how to *turn*.

It’s stupid. Previous euphoria Tommy felt swifts into hot embarrassment. He finally understands why flying became so easy here, in the open skies – he just has nothing to faceplant into. Who knows, maybe Tommy would keep going forward until Phil had caught up with him or he would fall down from exhaustion – because *fuck*, he doesn’t know how to land, either – if it wasn’t for the dozen crows that appear under him.

Phil’s Chat, Tommy could bet. And he turns out to be right when he recognizes Prick’s voice. The crows speed up and gain height almost synchronically and Tommy suddenly finds himself amongst the mess of flapping black wings.

They fly as one. Tommy finds himself subconsciously copying the other crows’ movements. The curve he makes above the portal is unnecessarily huge but Tommy only follows others without any real experience behind his shoulders and it feels right to do so.

They quickly fly the way back to the cottages the same route Phil and Tommy left it a few minutes earlier. Both Phil and Techno are far behind when they scatter around and land in different places: three on the roof, a couple on a fence, on a windowsill, a tree branch – Prick and Tommy are the only ones who go straight for the snow. Mostly because he is less likely to break his bones that way.

Tommy rolls upon the landing. He doesn’t realize how much energy flight had taken from him until he slumps down with his chin and stays laying there despite the cold. Phil has to scramble him from the snow like he is a bubble gum sticking to concrete.

“I might be dying,” Tommy informs when he is partially tucked under Phil’s cloak. “Plan the funeral. Inform my wives. Tell them I haven’t included them in my will.”

Techno, apparently, has landed, too, because they meet eyes and the look that Tommy gets from the man would be enough for a Wither to drop dead.

“I can’t believe I got beaten in a race by a child and a bird at the same time,” he grumps.

“Don’t take it as a personal offense,” Phil reassures him. “You know I’d beat you any day if my wings were still intact.”

His eyes get that sad look again, for a mere moment, but it dissolves as quickly as it appeared, and Techno hums, putting a hand on Phil’s shoulder, just above where his wings connect with his back.

“Feeling better?” Techno asks.

Phil nods, and even if he doesn’t thank him with his words the gratitude is evident in the way he grips his arm back. Tommy climbs the avian’s clothes and hops over to his shoulder, pecking at Techno’s hand.

“Hello?” Tommy pouts, irritated. “I was here the entire time, too.”

Phil and Techno share a look and burst laughing.

Only later it dawns on Tommy that his entire flight, an idea of an escape, hasn’t crossed his mind once. He could have left at any moment; kept flying and flying until Phil and Chat stopped following him, and maybe even eventually got to Snowchester – but he didn’t. Why, Tommy doesn’t know himself.

Was it the impact of Chat? Did Phil send them after him so that he wouldn’t get too far away? He must have, or Tommy doesn’t have any other explanation to why he didn’t skedaddle the fuck out of here yet. He is angry at losing the perfect opportunity of an escape, both at Phil and at himself, and gets worse when his eyes fall onto the portrait on the wall – the one that had been here ever since he was rescued by the avian – and, for a second, doesn’t recognize the person on it.

Wilbur. *The* Wilbur. His brother, his only family to this very day, and Tommy had almost forgotten his face right now. He got too relaxed in the past few days and let his attention stray away from the fact that he is fucking losing his memories. Today, he can’t remember Wilbur’s appearance. What about tomorrow? What will be the point of getting to Snowchester if he won’t even recognize Tubbo upon his arrival?

Tommy bumps his head against the closed window. “A few more days,” Phil promises, approaching him. “I feel a snowstorm coming, can’t let you out today for sure.”

Tommy would think that Phil is just making up excuses to keep torturing him for longer – if it wasn’t for the sensation that started buzzing faintly at the back of his head and vibrating on the tips of his wings. Something in the way the wind moved had told him that the weather is going to get bad soon.

Heavy clouds taking over the skies towards the evening had proven them both right. It starts snowing, lightly, at first, and Tommy entertains himself by drawing random shapes on the window, until the dropping temperature chases him away from the sill and closer to the burning fireplace.

Whoever had first invented these things have overlooked a major flaw. If one sits facing the fire, then they have to freeze their asses off on the contrasting cold of the room. If one sits facing the room, they have to freeze their faces off – and, well, the rest you know. The point is, Tommy is cold and since the fireplace is not a sufficient solution he turns his attention to the second biggest source of the heat in the room.

Phil is sitting on the couch, reading a book, humming a simple melody under his breath. He had changed his clothes to let the previous ones dry after the trident race earlier, and his wings are curled up around him like a blanket. Phil doesn't bat an eye when Tommy flies over to the arm of the couch and settles there with a sheepish look.

Tommy comes closer. It's a minuscule movement, his claws carefully digging into the fabric of the couch as he shifts his weight from one foot onto the other. Phil continues humming, eyes trained on the book, and flips a page every once in a while.

Tommy makes another step. And then another. And then he freezes next to Phil and the avian still is completely oblivious to the crow slowly creeping up on him and his thundering heartbeat. Tommy could spread his wing and the tip of the feathers would brush against Phil's thigh. He can feel the warmth from here, too. It washes over him, pushes away the cold and Tommy melts into it, puffing up and neck squeezing on itself until he looks like a ball of fluffy black feathers with two round eyes narrowed leisurely.

Fuck it. This feels great and Tommy won't move an inch unless someone forces him to.

He does rethink that statement when Phil shifts in the corner of his vision, the avian's blue eyes meeting his own with a soft look, a mix of amusement and tenderness people have in their faces when staring at something cute.

Tommy is, in fact, not cute, he is threatening and dangerous and he would erase that look on Phil's face with a knife if he was able to lift something heavier than a pencil.

"Enjoying yourself?" The avian asks, and Tommy caws at him in response, feathers falling flat against his body as he jumps away to the furthest end of the couch. The change in temperature is in an instant and the anger in his voice is doubled with the irritation from losing the comfort.

"You just had to ruin everything, didn't you?" he says and spreads his wings for a flap. Should be enough to get him back to sit back in front of the fireplace.

"No, no, I didn't mean it like that," Phil puts the book away and now he fully faces the crow, though he does need to lean forward before it looks like he is actually talking to Tommy and not to the picture on the wall. "You are more than welcome to stay."

Tommy doesn't have a mirror to look at himself but the crow's mimic should have been enough to display his distrust - Phil's smile grows from apologetic to reassuring. He shifts on the couch and a wing previously folded loosely behind his back is now slowly extending to his side. The feathers form a sort of little cave, and Phil pats on the empty space under it, "Come here."

"No thank you", Tommy caws, "I am not that desperate for comfort."

It's not that cold anyway. And it doesn't look comfortable.

Tommy is not a bird and he is not clingy and this is probably some sort of trap. A way to get him to lower his guard and for Phil to... Do whatever he wants him to do. Convert Tommy into one of little

compliant things that follow him around, his dumb flock of Chat.

A wind sneaks into the house through a tiny gap between the wooden planks and Tommy shivers when it creeps up on him.

"Come on," Phil says. "I know you want to."

As if he knows something about what Tommy wants. About how bad is the desire to peck Phil's fingers for taunting him. Tommy bird brain is telling him to cling to the avian like a lifeline, and the worst of all – he doesn't even mind it that much.

If he thinks really deeply of it, is being stuck in the crow's body that bad of a thing? Preening. Flight. Both things that Tommy greatly enjoyed but wouldn't ever experience if he didn't respawn as he is right now. Besides, people seem to mind him less as a crow. Both Phil and Techno tolerate his chaos and even enjoy it to an extent. Not that Tommy cares about what Techno thinks – fuck that guy, actually – but Phil...

Phil's a good person. He didn't have to pick him up there, with a broken wing and almost zero chances of survival and took care of him for the past few weeks. Tommy remembers what Phil had said about him earlier today. "*You're going to get attached.*" "*I'm afraid I already am.*" Isn't that a clear indication that he *cares*?

After all, it's all what Tommy had ever wanted. For people to care about him as much as he does about them. Staring at the kind and patient look on Phil's face, Tommy finally snaps. He lets the human part of his brain turn off and the crow part takes over. He jumps into the warm embrace of Phil's wings, a tiny crow merging in with the shadow with only his eyes bright and sparkling in the dim darkness.

Only when a feather – too short for a primary that was supposed to be here – brushes against his back does Tommy realize that there is something wrong with Phil's wing. He is missing an entire row of his plumage. It finally makes sense what he and Techno had talked about earlier in the kitchen and after the race and why the avian had been using the trident instead of his own wings. Tommy is pretty sure he used to know that Phil couldn't fly, as well as why he had lost these feathers in the first place but had forgotten that together with tons of other important memories.

He doesn't have the heart to get annoyed and make it about himself, however, especially when the avian brushes a hand absently down the bare patch on his wing and his expression falters with that distant, longing look again.

Tommy learned to fly today but Phil lost that ability permanently. And that, that is just unfair. Unlike Tommy, Phil is *meant* for flight, yet he is bound to earth by the injury that was supposed to heal months ago.

Tommy doesn't want to leave Phil in that state. It's wrong, somehow, like he owes the avian some sort of support. And if Tommy can't restore Phil's flight he can do another bird thing he had learned recently from Chat.

"What are you doing?" Phil asks when Tommy straightens up and experimentally pecks at his wing.

"I'm trying to preen you; don't you see?" Tommy caws back. "I'm not very successful at that, though."

Tommy really underestimated the sheer size of Phil's wings. But Tommy is nothing if not stubborn and if he decided to wrestle with feathers that are longer than his entire body length he will damn do

that.

Phil must have understood his intentions at some point so he lowers his wing until it almost lays flat against the couch. Tommy dives into the long and complicated routine of preening the avian's wings.

By the time Tommy finishes, his muscles ache and there are more loose and broken feathers on the ground than he can stuff into his nest, but it's all worth it. It's all worth it when Phil smiles and thanks him and scratches his head and his neck gently.

Phil is not a human. But he is not a crow, either, he is something in-between, like Tommy is. Where Phil carefully balances on the edge of two worlds, however, Tommy is hanging onto dear life.

Preening is meant for flock.

Does this mean that... Phil is now Tommy's flock?

Yes, he allows his eyelids to fall down leisurely. *I suppose he is.*

Tommy bites Phil each time he tries to stop petting him, until his body starts to feel heavy and his head gets filled with cotton.

For a moment, Tommy lets himself muse of what his life could be like if he forever stayed as a crow, but he falls asleep before he can properly process that thought.

Chapter End Notes

Shoutout to Maltose for the idea of the trident scene!

If you are enjoying the fic don't forget to leave a kuddo, a comment and to subscribe. This chapter probably has a ton of mistakes and is awkwardly paced because author is finishing it at 5am and after eating a can of mushrooms. Mellodi you can dm me but I won't fix that until I get some sleep :D

Long awaited reunion

Chapter Summary

He doesn't understand it. He can't understand any of it. Last time Tommy checked, Tubbo still was his best friend, not *Ranboob's*. Perhaps he *really* doesn't understand. Maybe there is something Tommy is overlooking, something that he doesn't yet know.

Michael takes Tubbo's and Ranboo's heads into his hands, one after another, and presses his forehead against theirs. Tommy isn't sure when he had seen that before, but he knows that it's a thing piglins do to the members of their family *and* –

It also means that Tommy came too late.

Chapter Notes

Sorry it took me so long to update! Take this angsty chapter as a reward for your patience.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The storm blusters through the night. In the morning, it finally falls quiet outside, and the sun shines brightly through the windows. Phil opens the front door. Tommy jumps forward curiously, and squeaks when snow tumbles inside from the porch and buries him whole under it.

It's fucking *freezing*. Some of the snow melts from the heat of the house and his body combined, soaking his feathers with cold water. Tommy's day immediately gets one thousand percent less funny, and it only gets worse when he manages to get his head out and the first thing he sees is Phil choking on air with a wheeze.

"You're laughing," Tommy says in a disbelieving tone. "I'm freezing my ass over here, and you're laughing."

"Sorry, mate," Phil crouches in front of him and extends a helping hand. Tommy bites it and hops over on his shoulder instead. He makes sure to rub the wet feathers against Phil's neck, too, and deems himself avenged when a handful of snow falls over the avian's neck, making him yelp and curse aloud.

Phil has gone off to shovel his porch and stairs while Tommy dries out by the fireplace, enjoying the blows of heated air flowing through his feathers. Some hot chocolate would be nice, too, but apparently, crows are not supposed to drink that. Phil had poured himself a mug last night for warmth, and Tommy tried to get a sip, too, only for a hand to cover it over right in front of his face.

"Chocolate is toxic for birds," he explained, and that had to be Tommy's biggest disappointment since he had become a crow. He can put up with bird brain, with the humiliation and memory issues, but *this?*

“I want my hot chocolate and I *will* fucking get it!” Tommy screeches, pecking Phil’s hand.

Fast-forward to present, and Tommy did not get his hot chocolate. Which makes him consider again whether he really could manage living the life of a bird. And it’s not that much of a joke, now, as it turns out he has to decide that very soon.

Phil comes back half an hour later – much more than it would take to clear some snow with a fully enchanted netherite shovel – and looks at him so sadly that it makes Tommy freeze.

“I promised to release you today, didn’t I?” Phil says and – *oh*.

Is this what Tommy thinks it is? Phil is going to actually keep his words this time?

“Come on,” Phil says. He extends a hand in front of himself, and Tommy flies over to it, landing carefully so as not to sink his claws too deep into the sleeve of his shirt.

“Fucking finally,” Tommy grumps. It comes out much more strained and unsure than he intends to. With a sinking feeling of defeat washing over him, Tommy has to admit he knows why.

Two weeks ago, if somebody had told Tommy he’d ever consider staying in the crow’s body for the rest of his life, he’d tell them to fuck off, probably with a knife in an alleyway past nine pm GMT time.

Now, something had changed deep inside of him. Tommy can almost feel it, a string connecting him to Phil. It must have something to do with all the bird shit going on with his brain, that and the weird urge to call the avian part of his flock. Tommy agrees with his brain, for once. He and Phil have such a paternal relationship. Tommy's like a father to Phil.

Phil and Tommy are outside, now. His chest hurts and he suspects that the frigid thin air is not to blame on this one. Tommy can take off at any moment. His wings are ready and are itching for flight, but he stays. For once, he wants to let the things flow on their own, for the moment to unravel without his interception. Maybe his way of distancing himself is what keeps him from pressing himself into Phil's neck.

"Well, that's it for our joint journey, I guess," Phil breathes out, "Even though it was more of a poorly scripted sitcom show."

"You're a fucking scripted shitshow," Tommy disagreed, tilting his head and gently pecking Phil's chin. "I am the greatest and the biggest crow around."

"You're a little shit." The hand that would previously gently slap him away now just strokes his feathers, up and down, and Tommy can't help the coo of satisfaction born deep within his chest. Phil smiles - and Tommy lets the sounds flow freely because if this is their last moment together, he might as well let himself enjoy it.

The thing is, Tommy can't keep living as a crow. He can't, because... Well, because it's wrong. Tommy is not meant to be a bird. He is a human that got progressively turned into a crow because of a stupid glitch in the server's code and in no world that is a normal thing. He is losing his memories, for fuck's sake. If he keeps further forgetting things with the same speed, he might, at some point, lose himself completely. If that's what Tommy has been reduced to – a mere pathetic crow – then maybe, it'd be better if he actually stayed dead.

But Tommy is alive, even if the entire server thinks he is not. Tubbo thinks he died. Tommy remembers the exile, the broken empty look on his friend's face when he showed up at L'manburg together with Techno. He hates to think that Tubbo has to go through all of that again. For his best friend, Tommy has to try.

Phil is your friend, too, his inner voice argues. *Your family*. Tommy's heart aches again when he has to forcefully push that thought away. Phil's only his friend as long as he is a crow. The moment Tommy turns back into a human is the moment their relationship will be broken forever.

And Tommy doesn't want that. He is afraid of looking into Phil's eyes and recoiling from the sheer amount of hate and disgust they are filled with. Tommy won't survive that, not after the same eyes were once full of warmth and care directed at him.

No. If – *when*, Tommy corrects himself – he is back in his normal body, he isn't going to tell Phil the truth.

Which means that this moment is their last chance to say proper goodbyes.

Phil finally stops petting him. Tommy relishes in the warmth that quickly melts away with the cold wind. He puffs up his feathers and ruffles his beak through them until he finds a loose one that he carefully pulls out and places in Phil's palm.

"A souvenir," Tommy announces. "You've got a ton of my feathers in your house, but this one's special. You better make a necklace out of it and cry every time from how much you miss me."

Phil takes the tiny feather with two fingers and caresses it gently. "A last bite, perhaps?" he says.

"Alright," Tommy agrees in a small voice. "You've asked for this yourself."

Tommy pecks Phil's finger – more like nibbles, honestly – and with a couple of strong flaps, he soars into the sky.

Tommy could've gone through the Nether Portal, but he preferred to take the long route above the tundra and the seas. Partially because the portal travel made him nauseous, but mostly because he wanted to take as much joy from flight as he can before he will have to give up his wings.

It's a good distraction, too. The urge to turn around and throw himself into Phil's arms is strongest in the first few minutes but gets weaker and weaker the further he gets from the Arctic commune. In the end, it settles heavily in his chest, present but easy to ignore if he doesn't let himself think of it too much.

Chat had joined him at some point. There were just three birds in the beginning, the ones Tommy had befriended, but their numbers quickly grew until there was a giant cloud of crows following him close behind. They readjust their flight to his clumsy pace, cawing encouragement at him. It's embarrassing, at first, but Tommy has to admit – leading hundreds and hundreds of crows feels fucking badass.

Tommy doesn't go directly to Snowchester. And it has nothing to do with the fear growing in his guts – no, he is not afraid of facing Tubbo, not at all – he just has one last thing he needs to do while he is still a crow and has Chat's full support.

They get to the hotel in the afternoon. Tommy is exhausted but revenge is a feeling not only sweet but very motivating, too. He finds a tree branch to sit and rest his wings at while his eyes search for Jack behind the glass walls of the building.

Tommy finds him sitting at the hotel reception, propping his chin with his hand and staring into the distance with an empty expression. He even assumed that Jack is dead - but bitches don't die so easily, on their own, and he is here to fix that inconvenience. Tommy flies over to the entrance and bumps his beak against glass. Jack's head snaps up, but he sees nothing, as Tommy has already ducked and hid behind the sign.

The man stands up, sighing heavily, and walks over to the entrance. Jack's step is heavy, his face pale and tired. Tommy almost rethinks his decision and decides to leave him alone. Almost.

When the door opens, Jack is met with a thousand pairs of unblinking black eyes and a one pair of mischievous blue ones.

"Payback time, bitch," Tommy caws, and before Jack's face can stretch any further, Chat attacks.

"Fuck!" Jack yells, and tries to close the door. The crows are too fast and half a hundred of the birds slip in. The lobby of the hotel turns into black mess of feathers and bird shit within minutes. Jack screams and swings his arm wildly, trying to dodge the quick pecks and bites of the diving crows.

He defenestrates himself out of the glass wall, swearing in a way that would make a sailor faint. Under Tommy's command, the Chat chases Jack down the Prime path until Jack manages to jump into a building and shut the door behind himself.

There is a sign by the door and Tommy can't read it, but it doesn't matter as the owner shows up pretty soon.

"Jack?" Captain Puffy asks, raising a brow. "What are you doing here?"

"Hiding," Jack barked, eyes nervously looking at something behind Puffy's back.

"From whom?!"

"From it!" Jack yelps, and he points a finger at Tommy.

A tiny fledging crow sitting on a tree caws sheepishly. There is no sign of any other birds around him. Chat got the memo fast. They were surprisingly good at staying away from observing eyes. Puffy has no idea that there are literally hundreds of crows frozen in the shade of the tree leaves.

"Aw," Puffy coos. "It's a baby bird!"

Tommy almost shreds her face for owoing at him but he'd be blowing his cover if he did so he puffs up his feathers, turning into a fluff ball.

"That's the vilest and the most sadistic animal I have ever seen in my life," Jack disagreed, staring at Tommy with eyes full of hidden horror. "It bit me at least twenty times!"

"Well, there had to be a reason for that, then," Puffy says. She reaches out to Tommy carefully and he jumps a few steps closer to bump his head against her finger. Puffy's expression melts immediately and Tommy knows he could've committed a first-degree murder now and she would've still defended him in court.

"Well," Jack says, voice dropping. "I suspect this might be the same crow I kicked a few weeks ago..."

"What the heck?" Puffy yelps, whipping around with a murderous expression on her face.

Jack raises his hands, "It attacked me first!"

"He would never do that," Puffy gasps.

"I did totally do that," Tommy says. "But, to be fair, he deserved it."

Puffy understands none of that so she still looks like she is about to punt Jack into the closest tree.

"The way it's going to go, Jack, is you will stop making up ridiculous stories about baby birds attacking you, and maybe I will consider not stabbing you right now," she says. Jack opens his mouth, about to disagree, but the sword Puffy pointedly takes out of her sheath is an argument that he can't argue against. "Now, excuse me, I need some appointments to plan."

Puffy goes inside the building and promptly shoves Jack out. The door is closed and the lock clicks, leaving the man to stand there, alone with Tommy. Jack gulps heavily and stares as Chat starts slowly coming out of hiding.

"Well, well, well," Tommy caws. Crows appear out of nowhere as he tilts his head. "Get him, boys."

Chat stays to mob Jack around for a while, and Tommy slips away while they are busy chasing him down the Prime path. The trio of his crow friends notices and tries to take the skies after him, but Tommy circles them twice, hissing and growling, and they fold their wings back with noises of confusion.

Tommy doesn't know if Chat's going to recognize him once he is human again. All he knows is that the only reason they helped him in the first place is because he looked like an injured child to them. Which he technically was, but that's not the point.

Saying goodbye to them will be almost as painful as with Phil. Tommy only really spent a few days with Chat but it still hurts to think that he won't be able to enjoy their company ever again. He is quick to get attached, he supposes, both to people and animals. Tommy is afraid that he might chicken out if the crows will look at him with the same sad eyes or try to preen his feathers again.

So he spreads his wings and snaps at the crow who tries to follow him, "Back off, Pussy."

And he continues his journey alone.

Tommy gets progressively nervous the closer he gets to Snowchester. What if Tubbo doesn't recognize him? Tommy couldn't reveal himself to Phil, what's the guarantee this time it's going to be different?

There is none. But Tommy doesn't have another choice, and he won't forgive himself if he doesn't at least try.

The first living soul Tommy finds in Snowchester is an enderman.

And no, Tommy is not talking about Ranboo but a normal, wholeass enderman wandering around the tundra of Snowchester.

The surprising thing is not the mob itself but the fact that when the enderman vwoops, something small and partially obscured from Tommy's view answers him with a similar sound.

Now, the last time he checked, Enderman didn't have baby versions, and the thing that Tommy sees is clearly a child. He has a second to celebrate - *fucking finally*, I'm not the youngest person on the server anymore - before he realizes that, one, nobody can enter or exit the server, thanks to that green bitch Dream, and two, the child is not a human.

A young boy, not older than four by the looks of it, with bright pink hair and floppy ears poking out of it on the sides of his head. The child is like Techno, but less of a jerk and more of a zombie.

Why a child clearly belonging to Nether is wandering around the cold tundra of Overworld unsupervised is beyond Tommy's understanding. He hears another vwoop sound, and is shocked when he understands that the child is the one making it.

What the fuck. Since when did piglins start talking with endermen?

“ᄁᄁ ᄁᄁ ᄁᄁ ᄁᄁ ᄁᄁᄁᄁᄁᄁᄁ,” the child pronounces, stuttering. The enderman kneels beside him, not as much of a cryptid monster Tommy is used to seeing them as, but a gentle giant looking at the boy curiously.

“ᄁᄁᄁᄁᄁᄁᄁ,” the enderman repeats.

The child claps his hands. “Michael,” he chirps happily in Piglin.

Good to know that Tommy still understands the language. When was the first time he asked Techno to teach him? It was cold, he knows, and dark, and it smelled of gunpowder and blood. And he remembers the faint glint of something – surprise and gratitude and happiness, he thinks, before it shifted into Techno's usual indifferent expression. Perhaps he felt lonely because people couldn't understand him speaking in his mother tongue. Tommy surely understands the feeling now.

The child – Michael – takes Enderman's hands into his own. They look tiny in comparison with the curved claws of the monster. This is obviously not his first time meeting an enderman – he knows to avoid looking into its eyes – but it makes Tommy's feathers puff up anxiously anyway.

He doesn't know this child. Fuck, Tommy doesn't even know whose child that could possibly *be*. But the sight of a toddler so close to a creature that tears through flesh and bones like its claws are made of pure diamond still rings a bell of panic in his head.

The moment Michael lets go of the enderman, and it takes a step back, Tommy caws at the top of his lungs. The sound startles the monster and he teleports away. Michael blinks at the rain of purple particles, letting out a disappointed chuff.

Tommy exhales with relief. At least the enderman is gone. Which is only half of the problem done, because Michael is now alone, in the middle of the woods, and by the looks of it, is going to go even deeper, in the opposite direction of Snowchester. Tommy has to stop him. It's going to get dark in a few hours, and he doesn't want to check whether nighttime mobs are going to attack the child or not.

Tommy takes his words back. Michael is a bitch, for making his life even more difficult than it already is. He should be busy looking for Tubbo, not dying of worry for a random child getting lost in the forest. Tommy doesn't get a choice on this one; it's not like there are a ton of other people jumping into the rescue, so he has to attract Michael's attention somehow.

If a toddler can talk gibberish enderman, then Tommy sure can make a parody of Techno's speech. Of course he can. Piglin is a pussy language anyway.

Tommy isn't sure what exactly he says, just copies something Techno rumbled in one of the few memories he can recall vividly from the time they spent living together in his cottage. And it *works*. It actually fucking works. The sound he makes sounds almost exactly like Techno's snort, even if Tommy's throat feels weird and all tight as air passes through it. It makes Michael stop abruptly, nevertheless, and turn his head around in search for its source.

The crow flies over to a branch a few feet away and repeats the sound. Michael's eyes flare hopefully; he chuffs in response and takes a step towards him. Tommy mimics the sound at him repetitively, flying further away each time. Michael realizes that the snorts are getting quieter, and takes running after him.

Tommy flies out of the forest and into an open area in the middle of Snowchester. Michael follows a moment after, almost stumbling on a rock in a hurry. He looks around, shifting from foot to foot, as Tommy lands in the snow in front of him. Michael looks less hopeful and increasingly more confused the longer he can't find the non-existent piglin.

It feels terrible to trick a child like that. The lost whining sound Michael makes tears him apart. He didn't sign up to be the toddler's fucking babysitter, but Tommy would feel like a monster for leaving him alone in such a state.

Tommy snorts again. Michael looks down at him with wide eyes – or one eye, to be exact. He kneels on the snow and chuffs with surprise. The crow mimics the sound right back at him. Michael smiles and rumbles something in Piglin. Tommy only recognizes the word 'small' amongst the long lines.

Now, Tommy is *not* small. He is the biggest crow in the world and everybody who thinks otherwise should be immediately unalive. Everybody except Michael, because he is a child and children like small animals and Tommy is kind of trying to get into his trust now.

"Small," Tommy agrees, defeated.

Michael laughs. Tommy chirps a few times at him, and he claps in delight. It makes him a bit warm in the chest, too. Tommy never took a huge liking to children but he has to admit that this one is *kind of* adorable.

He jumps away when two hands reach out to him. "Hey, none of that grabbing shit," Tommy caws. He knows that Michael could accidentally crush him if he is not careful enough and he doesn't want to spend another two weeks on forceful rehabilitation with a broken leg or something like that.

Michael chuffs. Hands in wool mittens pull out a compass out of his pocket. It's enchanted and shiny, the arrow pointing steadily at one of Snowchester's houses. Michael demonstrates it to him proudly. Tommy took a certain liking to shiny things ever since he had become a crow. Either that or the faint feeling of familiarity is what really tugs him in the direction of the compass.

Fuck. Tommy might really regret this later, but he takes off the ground and lands on surprised Michael's palm, clutching the compass in his claws from both sides, barely noting when the arrow

spins around once and points at him.

His precautions turned out to be for nothing. Michael is surprisingly gentle while scratching the front of his neck, just below his head. Tommy melts, purring, making the child beam and chirp. Michael looks happy. Maybe Tommy can tolerate a few more minutes of petting if it makes the boy smile.

A sound of a dry stick snapping under someone's step startles Tommy. He is in the air before he can process the fear. Tommy circles Michael as a figure steps out of the forest and almost forgets how to flap his wings when he sees the face covered in huge burn scars.

"Michael!" Tubbo calls, "What are you doing out here alone?"

Tubbo runs over to Michael, and the boy allows himself to be hoisted up in steady arms, shoving the compass back into his pocket beforehand.

Tommy flies over to one of the houses. There are stairs leading to the front door and he all but slumps on the railings. His heart beats madly in his chest. Tommy's eyes won't leave Tubbo and the child even for a second. This is his chance. Tommy was worried that Tubbo won't recognize him; now that he knows that he can mimic sounds, it's not an issue anymore. He still remembers a lot of their shared memories. A few moments to figure out how to place his tongue and how hard his throat has to squeeze to pronounce the words properly and he can even call Tubbo by his name.

Tommy takes in a deep breath, gathers courage *and* –

The door of the house opens abruptly. Ranboo stumbles out of it, hurriedly pulling a coat over his own thin shoulders. His hair is a mess and so is his usually neat and tidy suit; he looks like he had fallen asleep on accident and just woke up.

"I'm so sorry," Ranboo says, eyes wide. He relaxes when he sees Michael in Tubbo's arms, waving a hand at him, and walks over to them relatively calmly. "You scared me so much, Michael," he says.

Ranboo comes closer to Tubbo and Michael. His arms are long enough to embrace them both in a hug at once. Tommy finds himself almost falling off the branch when Tubbo leans into the embrace and tucks his head under Ranboo's chin. At times, Tubbo is more skittish with touch than Tommy is. He doesn't let everyone close. To be honest, the only person Tubbo allowed to hug himself like that was Tommy, and now... Ranboo, too?

Memories flash vividly in front of his eyes. The new hotel opened next to Tommy's. The enderman hybrid's nervousness when Snowchester was mentioned at the Syndicate meeting. The burning feeling inside of Tommy's chest when he looks at Ranboo and Tubbo walking past him, touching shoulders.

He doesn't understand it. He can't understand any of it. Last time Tommy checked, Tubbo still was his best friend, not *Ranboob*'s. Perhaps *hereally* doesn't understand. Maybe there is something Tommy is overlooking, something that he doesn't yet know.

Michael takes Tubbo's and Ranboo's heads into his hands, one after another, and presses his forehead against theirs. Tommy isn't sure when he had seen that before, but he knows that it's a thing piglins do to the members of their family *and* –

It also means that Tommy came too late.

He watches Ranboo and Tubbo supporting each other as they walk all the way to the porch and up the stairs. Michael smiles at him, rumbling something softly. Tubbo's dull gaze slides past Tommy for a mere second, but there is not a single sign of recognition and the eye contact breaks before Tommy can even let out a caw of frustration bubbling in his chest.

Does it even matter at all?

Tommy gets stuck in the prison for one week, and Tubbo decides to build a hotel, right next to his own, to compete. Tommy dies, and Tubbo starts a family with Ranboo less than three weeks later. Tubbo already had found someone to replace him with, maybe he would've just ignored Tommy even if he still was human.

He knew they were growing apart for the past few months, but he never would've thought Tubbo could just leave him behind like that.

It makes him feel angry, but also incredibly hurt. Tommy has been betrayed before many, many times, but it's one of the feelings you never get used to. Like your entire world has been turned upside down and suddenly everything doesn't make sense anymore.

Tommy is a big man. He shouldn't break down over something as stupid as that. He doesn't own Tubbo, after all. He can't dictate his choices. But it still hurts a fucking lot that it happened so fast and Tommy couldn't even do anything about it.

Ranboo nudges Tubbo forward and opens the door for him. He has to bow his head before he can enter through the doorway and, still clinging to each other, they make their way inside.

A momentary wave of warmth washes over Tommy and it is gone as soon as the door closes again.

Tommy presses his head into the window with a soft thud. He can see Tubbo putting Michael down and helping him to take his coat off while Ranboo keeps himself busy by rummaging through the kitchen drawers. Tommy can see their mouths moving but can't hear the words. Ranboo says something, and Tubbo laughs, and Tommy can almost imagine the sound of his laughter in his head. He hates how casual and homely it looks, a family preparing for a dinner. How long ago did he and Tubbo were that happy together?

Never, Tommy realizes. Tubbo never looked that relaxed with him, he can't remember a single moment where the boy's smile didn't hold a hidden strain to it, where his eyes didn't look so infinitely exhausted and old.

For some reason, guilt wrenches Tommy's insides. Like that tired empty expression on Tubbo's face in every one of his memories is somehow his fault. It surely feels like it.

With Ranboo, Tubbo looks like he is supposed to, a young boy with a grin on his face. With Ranboo, Tubbo looks happy. And if Tubbo is happy... is there really anything else Tommy could wish for?

Ranboo is a good guy. When Tommy looks past the jealousy, he can't remember anything he could be angry at him for. Even at the Syndicate meeting, Ranboo looked like he was genuinely upset with his death.

Perhaps, Ranboo could be good for Tubbo. Perhaps, Tommy needs to leave them both alone.

Michael finally notices him sitting on the sill. He says something and points a finger at him, tugging at Ranboo's shirt. When the enderman hybrid finally turns to face the window, the crow is already

long gone.

Tommy soars into the sunset sky. He doesn't know where he is going and why. He doesn't care about it, either. Tommy's mind is completely blank, for a long while, until a tower and a small hill come into view, making him realize that he had instinctually returned home.

There is a statue standing in front of it, drowning amongst freshly planted poppies and daisies.

What an asshole move, to put a literal statue of a random dude in front of his house, Tommy thinks, until he recognizes himself in the stone figure.

Memory issues are not to blame on this one. Tommy hasn't looked like that for a very long time. The statue's shoulders are straightened, his face gazing forward with confidently creased eyebrows and a smirk of a challenge on his lips, looming over the tiny crow cowering at its feet. It's ironic, Tommy thinks. The past and present versions of him are put against each other like this.

There are flowers stacked at the bottom of the statue. Some of the bouquets are old, petals either dry or rotten, others are recent, blossoming with both their petals and fragrances. He sees a few flowers of purple hyacinths amongst them, bound together with a ribbon that looks similar to the one Niki tied up her hair with during the Syndicate meeting.

Both the statue and the flowers confirm one important thing for Tommy: the SMP has moved on from his death. Or would it be more accurate to say that the server moved on from Tommy as a whole?

Everyone hates him. Techno, Phil, Jack, Niki and a lot of others. Those who don't hate Tommy, the few friends he had left, have already accepted his death.

Tommy could keep pushing it. Return to Snowchester, keep bothering Tubbo and Ranboo until the realization finally dawns on them. The key word is he could. But he isn't going to.

Tommy is hurt. He feels betrayed. But he doesn't want to burst back into his friends' lives, destroy the little peaceful world they managed to build for themselves and hold them back from finally healing and moving on. Tommy knows that it's like to put up with the ghosts of your past, and he certainly doesn't want to become one.

Besides... Tommy is tired, infinitely exhausted.

He is bound to be in the center of the fire, forced into action even when the only thing he wants is some peace. Tommy's only attempt at getting closure, putting down a lid on the chest of his own pain and struggle ended up with him fucking dead.

The closest he ever got to retirement was the past few weeks of him living as a crow. No wars. No conflict. No worries, no night terrors, no people trying to kill him with false smiles on their faces. Tommy could be loud, selfish and brash, and still accepted with all of his flaws wholeheartedly. Tommy could care for someone without his attachment being ever used against him. Tommy could be *himself*.

There is Dream, an ever present loop around his neck. He will always find a way to hurt Tommy even when he is locked up in the most secure of the prisons. The only reason Dream had left him alone for the past few weeks is because he thinks he has broken his favorite toy at once.

And if Dream doesn't get Tommy, there is always a problem to solve on this server, always a conflict to get dragged into. Tommy doesn't want to live like that anymore. He's done fighting, and if living as a crow for the rest of his life is a defeat – then so be it. He surrenders.

Thus, Tommy has made his decision. And there is one place on this server that will certainly welcome him back.

Tommy throws a glance at the twilight sky. It's going to be pitch black by the time he reaches the sea if he wants to take the long route again. As far as he has learned, crows don't have built-in night vision, so a Nether portal it is.

His wings ache with the movement, but Tommy still spreads them for a flap. Before he can take off, however, he hears steps on the Prime path.

The urge to hide is strong. Tommy pushes it away. He has nothing to be afraid of, not when he is just an innocent little crow nobody can hold a grudge against.

The person approaching turns out to be Techno. Tommy expects him to just walk by. Instead, Techno steps off the wooden slabs and goes directly to the statue.

He is dumbfounded and confused as he sees Techno sit down in front of it. What is this? Did he come to personally celebrate Tommy's death?

Tommy didn't think Techno could be any more of an asshole than he already is. He clearly was wrong. Tommy contemplates launching a surprise attack at him until Techno reaches for his mask and puts it off, making him freeze.

The expression looks foreign on Techno's face, almost wrong. He clearly thinks that nobody's watching him and Tommy feels like he is intruding on something he is not supposed to. Which he isn't. It's literally his house, the statue of him, and Techno sits in front of it like he is mourning on a grave.

That's what Techno is doing, isn't he?

Tommy has a hard time accepting that fact but after ten minutes of absolute silence he doesn't know what Techno else could have come to the statue for. Especially when he takes an item out of his inventory – a vinyl disc with a light-blue mark in the center – and puts it amongst the flowers.

Tommy can't remember which disc it is. And then he suddenly does. Christmas. Tundra. Turtle helmet on Tommy's head.

"It's my canon disc," Techno says, smirking as Tommy slips 'Wait' into the jukebox.

...Maybe Techno isn't that much of a dick as Tommy originally thought him to be.

Tommy leans forward to get a better look at the disc. He slips off the edge and yelps in fear. Techno catches him just before he hits the ground.

"Hi again," Tommy caws, shaking off his feathers and staring into Techno's face without an ounce of fear, "...bitch."

Techno hums like he can understand him. "I feel like I know you," he says.

“Let me refresh your memory,” Tommy generously suggests, and immediately bites his finger. Techno doesn’t even flinch. He catches Tommy’s beak with two fingers when the crow tries to peck him again.

Fuck. Tommy takes his words back. Techno’s a prick and an asshole and should be stabbed as a punishment. He thinks he is ten steps ahead for disarming him but he is clearly wrong because he forgot about Tommy’s claws and gets his palm scratched for that.

“Yup,” Techno says. “That’s definitely the crow Phil’s been talking my ears off about for the whole day.”

Tommy is so startled by Techno’s words he forgets about attacking Techno’s hand at once. Is this true? Does Phil already miss him? Techno has no reason to lie to a crow, after all.

“I’m going home,” Techno straightens, putting his mask back on and shaking grass off his pants. “And if you’re going with me, you better hurry up before I change my mind.”

“Well,” Tommy caws. “If you’re offering.”

The crow flies over onto Techno’s shoulder and buries himself into the fur lining his collar. Techno raises a brow at him.

“I’ve meant it like, with me,” Techno deadpans. “Not getting a free Uber ride on my cape.”

“Too late,” Tommy caws back. “I like it here and you’ll have to fight to get me off.”

Techno grumps a little more, but, in the end, heads off in the direction of the Nether portal. Tommy says his goodbyes to the statue, the disc and the flowers – and with them, to his old life – and never glances back again.

Techno knocks on the door of Phil’s house. The avian opens it a few seconds after. The eyes full of worry and sadness clear up a bit when he sees Techno.

“You’re back,” Phil says.

“Not just me,” Techno rumbles.

Phil looks confused, up until the moment a tiny black head peeks out of the thick furs of his collar and sneezes quietly.

"I'm back in black, bitches," Tommy caws.

Chapter End Notes

Shoutout to Rose/Krispe Kreme for beta-reading this chapter!

We're nearing the finale of the fic soon, how are you guys feeling? :D

The last chapters are probably going to get progressively harder to get right but I will try my best, so giving kuddos and bookmarks, as well as commenting and subscribing would show your support and help me out to finish the crowfic soon.

You might have noticed that this fic has become a part of series now. This is because Every Flight has a confirmed happy ending but I have ideas for angsty alternatives as well that I want to put into a separate fic. Don't worry, the happy ending still counts as the true, aka canon one, so you don't have to worry about crow!Tommy's fate.

Fledgling crow?

Chapter Summary

"Let me get this straight," Techno puts his glasses aside, "You want me to babysit a crow?"

Tommy glares angrily at Techno. Phil senses his anger without looking and reaches out to stroke his head. Tommy leans back into the touch, not because he likes it, but because the old man's heart wouldn't stand a rejection.

"Pretty much," Phil agrees. "I need to visit a person in the main area, and he doesn't stand being left alone."

Techno huffs, "Bring him along, then."

"I doubt animals are allowed in the place I'm heading to," Phil shakes his head.

"What about Chat?"

Phil crosses his arms on his chest. His wings ruffle up, and his expression looks equally nervous and amused. "Mate," he says. "The last time I left him alone with Chat, they almost burned my house down."

The crow puffs up his feathers defensively. "It was your fault!" Tommy screeches. "You can't leave fireworks in an open chest and expect me *not* to try and light them!"

Chapter Notes

TW: panic attack

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

A flower field stretches over the horizon.

The buds intervene into a carpet, so bright that Tommy wants to blink away the flashes of colors before his eyes. A light breeze strokes the flowers with a gentle hand, plays with the petals that look like flames under the gentle lighting of the setting sun, and the air is full of smells that fill his lungs with peace and spring tranquility.

It's beautiful, Tommy thinks. Not that bad of a place to be buried at.

Dream walks out of the tree line. His clothes are worn and tattered, his gaze scanning around with uncertainty. It feels weird to see him stumble through the field, mask absent and expression so lost, especially when he halts abruptly as his eyes fall onto something sprawled amongst the flowers.

Tommy knows what Dream sees. A body, not moving, sinking into the flowers that tangle around its fingers and latch onto its clothes. The boy's face, pale and sunken as it is, is marble-white in contrast with the poppies crowning his head. A part of Tommy wants to talk to Dream. Kneel beside the body, gently pull the head up, and stroke the blood-red flowers taking their roots from a deep gash in the back of his skull. All of that, just to ask, "*Are you happy? Is this what you wanted, in the end?*"

The image is vivid in his mind. Tommy doesn't give in and stays silent, even as the shock on Dream's face slowly shifts into something different. He reaches out. Tommy holds his breath. The hand hovers so close to his face that for a moment, he is afraid that Dream might actually touch him. It never happens – Dream recoils as quickly, fingers curling into a fist. He looks regretful, in a way that a child would be after breaking their favorite toy in the heat of a tantrum.

He walks away, faster with each step. Only when Dream disappears out of his line of sight completely does Tommy dare to stir. The body stays unmoving, and it's easy to miss a black shadow detaching from its chest. Tommy feels like he is awakening from a long sleep. The air still rings with danger of Dream's presence, but he shakes the fear of his feathers together with the remnants of drowsiness, suddenly feeling ecstatic.

He tricked Dream. If the former admin couldn't figure out he is not dead – then nobody ever would. Tommy would celebrate, really, if it wasn't for the belated realization of where he is; he almost manages to forget he is standing on a body, but more importantly, *whose* body it is.

It feels strange for Tommy to stare into his own face. It's nothing akin to gazing at himself in a mirror, partially because that he is a bird, now, shifting his weight from one foot to another as he leans forward for a closer look. The body is cold, a shell broken and discarded, thrown away like an object no longer in use. And suddenly there is nothing beautiful about the flowers crawling over him. It's only a matter of time before they cover him completely and Tommy will be nothing but an indiscernible lump in the middle of nowhere.

His heart wrenches. Or his lungs. Tommy can't tell – as far as he is concerned, it might be his stomach acting out; the only thing he knows for sure is that there is something inside of him and that it *hurts*. It feels like a betrayal, to abandon the body to be inevitably lost and forgotten, but it hurts more to think of squeezing himself back inside.

Tommy doesn't want to get into that trap again. To stumble through life constantly unsure of himself with his fears ready to swallow him the moment he makes a wrong step to the side. Tommy's tired of that mere pitiful shadow of existence, and he won't return to it, even if it means he has to burn down all the bridges between him and his former self.

The string connecting the crow to the body simmers together with that decision. Tommy tugs at it experimentally and feels it loosen. Then he tugs again, and again, and *again*, until it finally snaps. Tommy caws in relief. It sounds bitter rather than happy, despite the sudden lightness he feels, but it doesn't matter, in the end. The only thing that matters is that he is *free*, and with a flap of strong black wings, he is also flying.

Before breaking through the ceiling of soft clouds, however, Tommy throws one last look back. A figure stands at the edge of the tree line, one that wasn't here before. Tommy can make out of an elegant silhouette, long craned neck and swirling shapes of antlers adorning the animal's head.

The deer shifts, and Tommy's wings fail him. As he panics and twists in the air, the black eyes watch him indifferently – and that is the only thing he sees before he slams into the ground and everything goes black.

They are in Techno's house. Tommy has never been here before, so he looks around curiously, noting the mess of freshly brewed potions and items scattered around, a vast contrast to the neatly tidied order of Phil's living room. The image is completed by Techno himself, in a plain t-shirt and pajama pants, with his hair braided loosely and thrown over his shoulder. It's hard to perceive him as the fierce and feared warrior The Blade when he looks like he had just gotten woken up. Or perhaps, the opposite – haven't had a good rest for a long time.

Techno props up his chin with his hand, yawning every once in a while, and his eyelids fall and rise slowly over crimson eyes fogged with sleep. He has been reading a book, a thin one with a dark cover and golden-tinted title, but he had put it aside as soon Phil started talking. Tommy is greatly entertained with miniscule shifts of his brows that get sharper the further Phil explains a favor he is asking for.

"Let me get this straight," Techno puts his glasses aside, "You want me to babysit a crow?"

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The crow puffs up his feathers defensively. "It was your fault!" Tommy screeches. "You can't leave fireworks in an open chest and expect me *not* to try and light them!"

Phil glares at him with accusation. Tommy's anger dies out, and he shakes his feathers off and clicks his beak shut. Okay. *Maybe*, he does feel a bit guilty when he remembers the scared expression on the avian's face. Even if Tommy was lucky to get off with nothing but a singed tail, Phil's a bit paranoid about leaving him without human supervision again.

Not that Tommy minds it all that much. He has to admit that Phil is right about one thing: he doesn't like being left alone. Tommy's not clingy, though. Whoever said that repeating something only makes it sound less believable can go and fuck themselves – he is going to yell it into every person's ears if he has to, because he is *not* clingy. It's just that crows are social creatures, and Tommy is a crow, and he is working on the whole accepting his new nature thing quite seriously.

And he is *successful* with it. Not only it no longer feels weird to have a beak for mouth and wings instead of arms but Tommy had become a master of mimicking. From scaring the living shit out of Phil with creeper-like hisses and zombie groans to mocking Techno's voice when the other man comes to visit, it's one of his greatest sources of joy.

“My name is Nugget,” Phil had muttered randomly the other day, and Tommy couldn’t stop himself from wiggling his tail feathers as he chirped the second half, “...and I’m a big fat chicken!”

That was a huge mistake on Tommy’s behalf, because Phil’s eyes brightened up with that familiar looking-at-something-cute expression. “Nugget,” he mused, “That’s what I’m going to call you now!”

Needless to say, Tommy was furious. First of all, he didn’t need a new name – he had a perfectly functioning one already – and secondly, even if Phil decided he needs something to call him by, he could’ve come up with something better than fucking *Nugget*.

“I’m going to run away,” Tommy promised, menacingly narrowing his eyes. “I will go on my angsty teen arc and I’m going to disown you because of this name. Even fucking *Karen* would be better. I’d rather be a Karen and sue you for this shit.”

He felt salty about the name for a long time and even avoided being in the same room as Phil for the whole three hours. The avian suffered without his helpful and greatly enjoyable company and begged him to return the entire time, so Tommy – the greater being in this house – had generously granted him with a mildly painful peck. Nugget is a *horrendous* name, but at least he didn’t end being a fucking Dave like Phil ‘*I have no imagination whatsoever*’ Minecraft had initially suggested.

Apart from that, Tommy’s life as a crow had been actually enjoyable. It felt like a weight had been lifted from his chest that he didn’t realize was there in the first place. Sometimes, it hits hard to realize that he forgot a certain thing. On certain days, Tubbo and Ranboo come to his mind and laughter will taste bitter on his tongue for the next few hours, but even such small flashes of sadness blur in his new everyday routine.

Now that he can fly, Tommy follows the avian around wherever he goes. In the morning, when Phil pours his sweat over the giant training area in the house’s basement, the crow is the one to bother him, not-so-subtly reminding him of taking breaks. After the lunch, Tommy glooms at the avian crawling in his pumpkin farm and planting seeds, only to get stuck under a piston and scream for help afterwards. And in the evening, when the sun sets and Phil rearranges the pillows on his bed into a comfortable nest, Tommy buries himself into the soft blankets and giant black feathers, feeling happier than he ever has.

The only thing that really managed to tarnish his mood the other day was a strange dream he had. The specifics started to slip away from Tommy as soon as he woke up, held up to Phil’s concerned eyes and breathing heavily, but he remembers flowers, peach sky turning black, flying and falling – but most importantly, the feeling of being *watched*. It transferred smoothly into reality and he couldn’t quite get rid of the fake shadows and silhouettes moving in the corner of his vision. After a few times he snapped at them and found nothing but empty air and a new dose of his paranoia spiking up, Tommy decided to pointedly ignore them.

The weird dream has been forgotten altogether when Phil had announced he will have to leave him for a few hours. He didn’t specify what for – probably didn’t think the crow would understand it, anyway – so it wasn’t a wonder that Tommy didn’t take the news well. Especially when Phil said he’d drop him off at Technoblade’s house. The Syndicate meeting still made Tommy’s blood boil every time he thought of it for too long. Even Techno visiting his statue with a music disk couldn’t make up for the pain he felt that day. It doesn’t matter if Techno regrets his words – and Tommy is not completely sure if he does – but what does matter is the fact that, at that moment, he meant them, and he meant them wholeheartedly.

Phil spent the whole morning convincing him, ‘*it’s not going to be that bad, mate. All better than staying by yourself*’, until Tommy had finally agreed to be the one to offer the metaphorical olive

branch. As much as he relished in a mental image of Techno begging for his forgiveness on his knees, it won't happen for two simple reasons. One, that is Techno. Techno, who rarely admits to his mistakes, who is borderline impossible to imagine apologizing to someone. The other reason is that, technically, Techno has nothing to apologize to Tommy for.

Not to the crow, at least. And not only because Techno did no harm to the fledgling but because Tommy will soon won't remember ever holding a grudge against him. He knows there was something besides Techno's reaction to his death that made him want to clench his beak tighter and lunge at him with a battle cry, but these images – filled with gunpowder, fireworks and death – slip away from his non-existent fingers like sand.

It's one of the memories Tommy lets faint away, with a taste of blood on his tongue and guilt in his eyes. He understands Ghostbur, now. Why hold onto painful memories if he has a chance to get rid of them so easily?

Besides, Phil is a huge part of his new life, and Techno is a huge part of Phil's. Tommy saw that a few days ago when the two spent an evening just chatting and enjoying each other's company. Techno had preened Phil's wings and the avian braided his hair in return – something that indicated that they were more just simple friends, but a *flock*, a family, in a way that Tommy and Tubbo once were.

If Techno is part of Phil's flock, then Tommy is willing to give him another chance.

He reconsiders that statement after Techno's initial reaction to Phil's request. Where Tommy expected him to be euphoric about getting to spend time with the poggest crow of the universe, Techno looks unimpressed and even slightly irritated. He sighs, however, and finally says, "You know I can't say no to you, Phil."

"I can," Tommy cuts in, tilting his head at Phil and digging his claws deeper into his shoulder. "I changed my mind. I'd rather go and mob Jack with Chat again than stay with him."

Phil gently takes him off his shoulder and holds in front of himself. Tommy is small enough that he can roll around on his palms and end up on his back. His feet up in the air, his head thrown over Phil's thumb, he looks at him with a silent pitiful plea.

"A few hours," Phil says, and Tommy's all hopes are shattered. "I will be back before you know it."

"Fine," the crow grumps. "But do not be surprised when you wake up tomorrow and find all of your shoes and hats destroyed."

Phil leaves after giving him a last quick scratch. Techno locks the door behind him and, without even sparing Tommy a glance, returns to his affairs, leaving the crow fully at his own disposal.

If there is one thing the world should be afraid of, it's bored Tommy.

In some rare cases, it can make him mature, normal and supportive – but that's only when there is someone to be supportive of. In other cases, if Tommy is bored, he will try to find a way to entertain himself – and pray that it's not going to be arson on someone's potato farm.

Techno's lucky today, as no potato farms come into Tommy's immediate eyesight, but what he does find is a crown carelessly casted off on a chest downstairs that makes him perk up with a mischievous idea.

Only around half an hour later, Techno stands up, joints popping as he stretches, and leaves in the direction of the kitchen, probably to get a glass of water or something like that. Tommy sees it as a perfect opportunity. He needs to be fast, though. He jumps and glides over gracefully - that is, losing his balance and almost doing a flip in the air - before harshly slamming into the chair.

Shit. Techno totally heard that. Tommy snatches the object from the desk, and flaps frantically as he climbs back on top of a bookshelf.

Techno comes running like he expects an army breaking into his living room through a window and stiffens when he notices Tommy staring at him. Or rather when he notices the emerald earring hanging from his beak.

“Don’t you dare,” Techno says, low, dangerously.

Tommy cocks his head, the earring tilting playfully on the golden clasp. Techno tenses. Tommy shifts. Techno lunges forward at the same time as the crow jumps off the shelf. He tries to catch him mid-flight and misses just by an inch and his hand gets lightly smacked by the black wing. Tommy swirls past him and dives downstairs. Techno has no other choice but to follow him by the ladder, frowning with a clear look of irritation on his face.

“Heh?!?”

Techno’s ‘heh’ sounds a lot like a muffled quack. Tommy doesn’t judge – he’d turn into a duck, too, if he saw an extremely satisfied crow sitting on top of a pile of gold. Techno has a ridiculous amount of shiny things around his house, just as if waiting for Tommy to collect: jewelry, minted coins, hair pins...

“Is that my *sword*?”

“No, that’s my mirror,” Tommy announces, putting the earring down on top of the pile and twirling in front of the polished metal surface.

“That thing is, like, twenty times your size and fifty times your weight,” Techno’s tone is somewhere in-between annoyed and impressed. “How did you even get it here?”

“Pure spite and dedication,” Tommy says, “pure spite and dedication, my friend.”

Techno makes a step forward. Tommy immediately grabs the earring with his claws tightly, adjusting his grip on the faceted emerald.

“Give that back,” Techno commands.

Tommy snaps his wings open proudly and hisses at Techno for a good measure. “My earring now, bitch,” he tilts his head, “Unless you’re willing to trade.”

He throws a look at one of the chests – one so full that the lid can’t even close properly. Through the narrow lit, lanterns’ light picks out on a rounded golden surface of an apple. Techno walks over it and pulls the lid up with an amused huff.

“Is that what you want?” Techno asks, picking up a gapple and throwing it into the air. Tommy’s mouth fills with saliva. He soars up and catches the fruit, the earring long forgotten and falling on the floor. Techno picks it up just as Tommy makes it to the top of one of the further chests, folding his wings and cooing with satisfaction.

"You can't even eat gapples," Techno says, "what do you need it for?"

"Watch me."

Tommy pecks at the fruit. Clearly, his beak is not designed for consuming apples, but it doesn't stop him from getting a tasty sweet lick from the juice that flows through the hole.

"Stubborn brat," Techno comments, putting his earring back on.

"Prick," Tommy caws back.

Techno looks over the pile of golden items, the crow that pointedly watches him even while nibbling the apple. "... You are bored, aren't you?"

"Finally, you got it." Tommy grumps. He flies over to the door and lands on the handle. It's enough to make it twitch a little but not to open fully. Tommy stares expectantly at Techno, who doesn't hurry all that much to let him outside. If anything, Techno looks extremely skeptical of the idea.

"Come on," Tommy whines. "Phil left me on your conscience. Imagine what he'd think if he learned I died from the lack of oxygen. Or sunlight. I need sunlight and oxygen, right now."

Tommy dramatically throws a wing to the side. It's enough to make his balance shift, and he almost falls off the handle.

"Fine," Techno sighs, catching Tommy and placing him on his shoulder. "Let me change my clothes and I will take you out for a walk."

What initially had to be a quick trip outside had turned into an hour-long commotion.

It starts simply with Tommy flying around the cottage, exercising his wings. He gets tired quickly and lands on the fence surrounding Carl's pen. The fledgling is *tiny* in comparison with the powerful animal that is all glistering skin and strong muscles. Tommy expects Carl not to notice him at all, so he cowers a little when the horse leans forward, curiously watching him with its intelligent black eyes.

"Hi," Tommy says in a suddenly small, high voice.

Carl breathes out carefully. The crow is washed over by the hot air blowing from the horse's nostrils. Tommy's feathers puff up; he lets out a cackle of joy and flies onto Carl's head, where he sits comfortably on the horse's mane.

Techno returns, carrying a stack of hay. He drops it off into Carl's pen, raising a brow at Tommy. "Is he bothering you, Carl?" he asks the horse casually, leaning against the fence.

"Me? Bothering? Never," Tommy gasps. "Carl likes me more than he does you. I bet you don't even feed him regularly because of your hibernation."

Under him, Carl lets out a lazy huff. Tommy considers it an agreement. "I bet you don't care properly for *any* of your pets."

Poor, poor, animals. What would they do without Tommy's timely intervention? The crow lands on Techno's shoulder, ducks into the furs lining his cape despite the hybrid's protesting yelp. "To the

turtles!” Tommy announces.

With some additional guidance and explanations – read: Tommy tugging Techno by his sleeve – they end up visiting all of his farms and pets. The turtles turn out to be totally fine, the bees buzzing cheerfully, and the polar bears leisurely blink at them, burying their muzzles into the fresh snow. Tommy still insists that he saved them all from starvation and keeps dragging Techno around the commune.

“I see that Phil has shown you around already,” Techno says as Tommy lands on the roof of an enclosure full of tamed wolves.

“He did,” Tommy says. He can’t help but mimic a few barks and pants back at the wolves, internally laughing at their genuinely confused muzzles. For a second, he thinks that he sees the corner of Techno’s lips tugging up, too, but the smile is gone so fast that Tommy is not sure if it ever was there in the first place.

“You forgot about someone,” Techno says.

Tommy snaps at him, straightening up. “I’m pretty sure that’s all of them,” he says. “The turtles, the bees, foxes, dogs, polar bears...”

Techno pulls out a gapple out of his pocket, cut into small pieces. “You can have that one,” he says casually, but Tommy can see his eyes sparkle with treacherous softness. “Since you’ve already ruined it, anyway.”

Something inside of Tommy *melts*. Three strong flaps and a quick glide ends with him seated on Techno’s palm and biting into an apple piece.

“I will think of giving you another one if you don't snitch on me to Phil later,” Techno says.

Drugging children birds? Fuck yeah. Tommy swallows another bite of the apple, feeling pleasant warmth flow through his body and push away the cold. He thinks that he can cross the entire server in one flight if he takes the skies right now, but chooses to jump off Techno’s hand instead. Tommy doesn’t sink into the snow and immediately takes the opportunity to roll around with his tongue sticking out and claws pointing up at the glistening tundra sun.

“Nevermind,” Techno says. “No more gapples for you.”

“Hey!” Tommy yelps. He shoots up to his feet and manages to snatch another piece before Techno shoves them all back into his pocket. He tries to take that one away, too, but Tommy is fast to leap into the air and away from him.

Techno ends up chasing after him through the snowy field. There are death threats pouring from one mouth and screeching swears from the other, but neither put any real heat into their words. Tommy laughs. Techno chuffs. Tommy makes a quick turn around him and dives into a lump of snow. Instead of sinking into it like through water, he hits something, *hard*, and sparkles light up in front of his eyes.

The crow whimpers. Techno is instantly silent, falling to his knees and scooping him up into his hands. “You alright?”

Tommy shakes the snow off himself, noting the flare of pain in his head and back that turns into dull ache after a few seconds. Techno runs a finger down his head and neck, further soothing it down, and

the crow quietly purrs. “All good,” he announces, and throws a look at the lump of snow accusingly. “Fuck you.”

Now that Tommy’s floundering had disturbed the previously smooth surface, he can see something darkening under it. Techno notices it, too – he reaches out and brushes the snow off until it becomes obvious that there is a small chest under it. A wooden sign is clumsily nailed to the front, and there is something written on it. Both the chest and the sign must have been here for a while now, since they got covered with snow and neither Phil nor Techno had noticed them before.

“Why is there a random chest on your property?” Tommy scolds.

Techno hums thoughtfully. “Interesting,” he says. “Who could I be receiving mail from?”

Ah, so that’s what the sign says. “Dunno,” Tommy huffs. “Certainly not me.”

Techno pulls the lid up and retrieves a thin book from the chest. It has a name signed on it. Even if Tommy can’t read, he leans closer for a better look, and almost misses the way Techno suddenly pales. He stands up so abruptly that the crow almost falls out of his hand.

“Techno?” he caws, confused.

Techno doesn’t answer. He has a strangely tense look on his face. Tommy could only guess it has something to do with the book, or even its author – since Techno didn’t even get to opening it, clenching the cover so hard his knuckles went white. It feels like something Tommy shouldn’t interrupt. Even if Techno’s behavior unnerves him, making his feathers ruffle up and a shiver run down his spine, he remains silent as they return to the house.

The cape is hastily left in the hallway, boots discarded beside it. Tommy flies over to Techno’s desk just as he puts the book down. He doesn’t hurry to open it. Just stares at it, for a long time. Buzzing with curiosity, Tommy picks on the cover and manages to turn it over with his head.

This is... disappointing. Not the fact that Tommy can’t read the sloppy handwriting – he was prepared for that already – but the lack of clues about who the author could be. He can see concrete crumps sticking to the dried ink and a bunch of lazuli smeared fingerprints staining the yellowish page, but that doesn’t necessarily point at Ghostbur – he used to give out his blue all around the server, so all he knows it could be fucking *Connor* who wrote the book.

Techno’s reaction is not much of a help, either. He frowns deeper with each word he reads, and his expression falls completely when he gets to the next page. It’s freaking Tommy out, his silence and his deeply creased eyebrows. Is it a death threat? A particularly suspicious lottery ticket? An invitation to participate in a cringey talk show?

Techno finishes the scribbled three pages in under a minute but rereads them a few times afterwards, and Tommy’s patience finally snaps. He doesn’t like to be left in the dark. If the book doesn’t concern him, then it’s not that important, anyway.

“I’m still here, you prick,” he caws. “Quit ignoring me!”

Techno tries to push him away, and Tommy ducks under his hand and bites him. There is an open ink bottle on the desk. Without thinking of it much, Tommy lunges and knocks it over. The ink splashes his wing and Techno’s shirt, but most of it flows over the open book, turning it into an unreadable black mess.

“What the fuck did you do?!” Techno roars.

The crow flinches at the sudden sound and gets shoved away. The movement is cold and harsh. A growl falters in Tommy’s throat when he meets Techno’s eyes; there is no warmth in them anymore; that mere hint of fondness dies out and is replaced with flaring anger. Tommy curls up on himself and swallows sickly. He doesn’t understand Techno. It’s just a fucking *book*. No need to get mad over something so simple, especially when Techno read it several times and probably has it memorized already.

Fueled by that thought, Tommy bites Techno one more time, deep enough to draw blood, and flies off the desk. Whatever. It’s not like he cares about what Techno thinks or does. He only agreed to stay here because Phil had asked him to. *Phil*. Phil. Tommy needs Phil, wherever he is. The crow skittishly looks around the room in search of an escape; alas, none of the windows is conveniently open for him to fly out of. Unless...

Thinking his plans over beforehand is not one of Tommy’s strongest suits. He didn’t put much thought into it when he threw himself into an empty chimney. Theoretically, it should be simple: keep flying up and up until you reach the top. Tommy would make it fast and easy if it wasn’t for two major problems – one, birds don’t fly vertically up like helicopters, two, he really overestimated the width of the chimney.

That realization only strikes him when he makes it a few feet up and gets stuck in-between the walls. Tommy’s one wing is to the front and to the side of him, half folded. The other one bawks into what feels like a rough surface of a brick. Tommy beats them both fiercely, but with a sinking cold horror it dawns on him that he can’t move.

Fuck. Sunlight from the hole above barely reaches where Tommy is, and he can only make out of vague shapes of his own feathers. His other senses sharpen up. It stings of smoke. Coal dust clog his lungs with each inhale, and his chest heaves faster than he can take in a proper gulp of oxygen. Tommy knows he shouldn’t give into the panic and try to steady his breathing but he is painfully aware of the walls pressing on him, and the fact that he is alone and trapped and –

Something grips the crow across his stomach. Tommy yelps and bursts into a deafening shriek. A low voice grumps in response as he is pulled down and out of the chimney. Bright light slashes his eyes, so he shuts them firmly.

A part of him knows he is not trapped anymore. Tommy’s wings beat almost as fast as his heart jackhammers and they meet nothing but emptiness around him. He doesn’t understand where he is, what he is afraid of, only the way fear wrenches his windpipe, cutting him off air and making him choke on his screeches.

He is pressed against something broad and warm. It’s completely different from the fire burning in his chest. Where his lungs feel like they are full of boiling lava, this warmth wraps him up in a blanket and eases his spiraling mind. Through the noise and ring in his ears, Tommy can make out of a muffled rhythm. His breathing steadies out together with its slow beatings, and he finally dares to open his eyes.

Oh.

Oh.

Tommy is being *hugged*.

He doesn't have another word for the weird hold he is kept at: a hand put on his back and pressing his head into Techno's shoulder, practically tucked under his chin. It feels weird but not unpleasant, the heat of the Nether radiating from the hybrid and sipping into his muscles, making them go slack. Tommy swallows and beats his wings out of instinct; they ache, indicating how hard he managed to tire himself out in his panic.

Techno shushes him. "It's okay," he rumbles. "Relax."

Tommy's wings stay spread as if they were prepared for another flap. They are not big enough to cover Techno's whole chest and the tips barely reach his arms, but it's the closest he can get to returning the hug. The hold lasts for another few minutes before the hand on his back disappears, but not without quickly scratching his head. Tommy whimpers and digs his claws into the wrist he is standing on.

"I would appreciate you not scratching me, please," Techno says, but makes no move to put the crow off his hand. Tommy pulls his claws out, ducking his head. It burns to admit that he grieves for the loss of contact, but the flustering of it slowly faints and turns into confusion. Tommy is dumbfounded by the fact that he got hugged by *Technoblade*, of all people. Bird or not he can't remember that happen to him, like, ever. Is Tommy going to get any explanation for this? How is he just supposed to accept the fact that Techno helped him to calm down from a near-panic attack?

Techno shifts. Previously crouching in front of the chimney, he walks over to the couch and sits down. Tommy gets startled and pecks the hand that Techno put over his neck for steadiness.

"— And you immediately start biting me," Techno says. "I'm going to make a pillow out of you and tell Phil that you simply run away."

"Fuck you, I know you won't," Tommy says, but still apologetically rubs his head against Techno's index finger. Not because he is sorry, but because he doesn't want to become a pillow.

Techno huffs with a very obviously warmed up expression. His hand turns black where the crow's feathers touched it. Only now Tommy notices the soot smeared all across Techno's shirt. He doesn't seem to care about it. Well, since his shirt is ruined already, maybe he wouldn't mind it all that much if Tommy moves just a *little* bit closer.

As a human, Tommy would never allow himself to do this. Both because of the humiliation and simple self-preservation instinct. But Tommy is not a human, he is a bird, and a small one at that, and that means he is allowed to do practically anything that he wants.

Including pressing himself against Techno's arm.

Techno chuffs out a sound similar to happy chirps Tommy heard from Michael during his visit to Snowchester. He leans back on the couch, lifting Tommy up to his chest. The crow practically melts from the warmth of the touch, tucking his wings and letting his head fall with a contented purr. "I'm not immune to small animal propaganda," Techno admits. "Mind you, I still like dogs more."

Feeling as calloused fingers run down his head and neck gently, Tommy thinks that Techno might be a liar.

"Do you know what The Art of War is?" Techno asks him at some point, pulling out a book seemingly out of nowhere.

Tommy doesn't know, and he falls asleep to Techno's steady voice reading to him aloud.

When Tommy wakes up, it's to the sound of knocking on the door. His eyelids flutter open as he yawns wildly, meeting eyes with amused Technoblade. Techno tries to stand up but Tommy pulls out a cat card and pecks his nose from the slightest steer.

"Can I open the door?" Techno patiently asks.

It's warm. It's comfortable. Tommy isn't going to move even if it's Sun Tzu himself at their doorstep. "No," he says, "you can't."

Meanwhile, the knocking resumes, more insistent this time.

"Techno, it's me." They can hear Phil's muffled voice behind the door.

Phil? Tommy perks up. His mind wakes up faster than his body does, and he ends up almost rolling off Techno's chest. As always, he gets caught before he can hit the floor, and put on a shoulder to sit on.

Techno stands up and walks over to the door. Tommy, a split of a second away from lunging himself into Phil's arms, pauses when he sees a second person looming over the avian in height.

"You didn't tell me we're going to have company today," Techno says. The shift in his behavior is an instant. It feels as though air around him stiffens, thick and tense. Tommy straightens up and caws, affected by the threatening energy Techno radiates with his entire being.

Phil walks in. He puts a hand on Techno's shoulder and squeezes it. It must have been some kind of a signal between the two, because Techno relaxes slightly. His eyes flicker, for just a moment, to the crossbow left laying on a crafting table, before he opens the door wider to let the stranger in.

Dark eyes glint under a half-mask on the upper part of the man's face. There are two massive antlers sticking out of his forehead that barely fit into the doorway as he promptly walks in. He has no weapons or armor, but something about him makes Tommy instantly nervous. The feeling becomes almost unbearable when the stranger's eyes fall on him, making a shudder run down his spine.

"This is Callahan," Phil says. "And he is the server's new admin."

Fear burns Tommy's veins like lightning. First few moments, he is completely frozen and speechless. *New admin*, it echoes in his head, striking him again, and again, and again. If Tommy had known Callahan before, he certainly doesn't remember it – but that doesn't matter. What does is the fact that the admin is the only person on the server with the power to see through Tommy's disguise.

His mouth went dry. Tommy's mind goes blank, and in that nothingness, fear emerges. He can already feel it; the air cutting off from his lungs, and his chest rising and falling a lot faster than it's supposed to. Callahan is not looking at him anymore, at least, his attention fully turned to Techno and Phil.

Tommy, still frozen on Techno's shoulder, does his best not to sink his claws deep as they all settle around the living room. Phil leaves his tools and weapons by the door in favor of sitting down on the couch. Techno and Callahan prefer to stand, purposefully or not – facing each other from the two opposite sides of the room. Admin is the one closer to the fireplace, and he picks up a coal, fiddling with it while Phil talks.

The avian explains something about Callahan being mute. Tommy doesn't listen to it too closely, still fighting against his panic. Little by little, he manages to press it down to a manageable degree.

Callahan looks so absent that he starts to think that the initial glance in his direction was just a result of his own imagination. Tommy takes off Techno's shoulder and lands on the back of the chair; this way, he can see Phil's face, too.

"He was a secondary admin from the start of the server," the avian explains. "But took over Dream's duties, too, after he was put into Pandora's Vault."

"What's the admin doing so far away from the main area, then?" Techno asks, arms crossed.

Phil looks hesitant before answering the question. It rings an alarm both in Tommy's and Techno's minds. The avian waves off a questioning-concerned glance thrown in his way, "There is no easy way to say this," he says, voice wavering. "Callahan has reasons to believe that Tommy is alive and is hiding somewhere on the server."

A pause. Seconds flow smoothly into a minute, then into another one, even if there is nothing calm about it. Phil's feathers shuffle behind his back. Callahan shifts his weight, his hooves clattering quietly, and eyes the other two hybrids with equal amounts of curiosity and indifference. Techno breathes in loudly and breaks the silence first, "He better not be hiding in my basement again."

"Who knows," Phil laughs, though there is no real humor behind his voice. "He might be. Callahan said he was looking for Tommy for several weeks already, ever since Dream killed him."

"Wait a minute," Techno tiredly rubs his forehead, "You're confusing me. Did Dream kill Tommy, or is he alive?"

"Both," Phil says. "Callahan was trying to rewrite the server rules, particularly about the three lives limit. He was in the middle of that process when Dream had killed Tommy. The code wasn't complete, so he wasn't sure whether Tommy had respawned, but he is present amongst the list of active players- "

"Which means that Tommy is alive and has been staying out of everyone's eyesight for the past month," Techno concludes. His face has a strange relieved expression Tommy can't contemplate in his current spiraling state of mind. "But why?"

Callahan and Phil share a look. "We don't know," the avian admits.

Tommy fucking *didn't*. He was in front of everyone's eyes this entire time. Nobody noticed. Nobody cared. To the point that Tommy decided to accept the fact that he will have to be a crow for the rest of his life.

Fuck his luck. Tommy wants to scream from how unfair and stupid this is. Where was Callahan when Tommy still wanted to return to his normal self? Why did he only come now?

A hysterical chuckle breaking through Tommy's clogged throat. A thought passes through his mind – maybe it was a blessing that Callahan never found him? If Tommy had been returned to his human body from the beginning, he'd never learn what it is like to be a crow. Tubbo would be stuck with him instead of moving on with Ranboo. Phil and Techno would continue to hate his guts and he'd never have a chance to get accepted into a family, a *flock*, again.

Apart from a weird look from Callahan, nobody pays much attention to his laugh. It's a mere piece of comfort to Tommy's racing thoughts. Phil and Techno don't know who he is. Callahan doesn't, either, as much as Tommy's paranoia tells him he does, or he would've exposed the fake crow already.

“Nobody knows who I am,” Tommy mutters to himself. And nobody should ever know, or the little happy world he has been living in for the past weeks will be shattered at once. *No*, Tommy can’t give into panic and let himself be known so easily.

He flies over to Phil and bumps his head against the avian’s elbow. Phil picks the crow up and puts him down on his knee. Tommy forces himself not to flinch when Callahan’s attention turns to him. The admin nods at the crow in a way that could be interpreted as a silent question.

“This is Nugget,” Phil demonstrates the crow to Callahan. Tommy tilts his head and lets out a short caw. “He is the crow I wanted to ask you about.”

Tommy’s very natural imitations of a bird come to an abrupt halt. He can’t help the half-confused, half-scared whimper that leaves his throat. What does Phil mean? What did he want to ask regarding *him*?

Callahan leans forward. He is staring at Tommy. Intensely, unblinking, like he knows there is something more about the cowering crow that Phil and Techno, exchanging a glance, don’t notice. Tommy’s mind screams at him not to freeze, to act natural, but his limbs and voice won’t comply with him anymore. Callahan makes a shift motion with his wrist, and a screen comes up out of nowhere, flashing with words and numbers.

Admin panel, Tommy gulps. He recognizes it from the few times Dream had used it in public. Admins only do that when there is a problem to be immediately checked or fixed, and hide it otherwise so that they don’t have any advantages over other players on the server. Beside Tommy, Phil tenses, “Is there something wrong?”

Callahan doesn’t answer. He presses something on the panel. A nametag appears above his head, ‘*Callahan.*’

Tommy forgets how to breathe. Like in slow motion, he sees two more nametags, ‘*Philza*’ and ‘*Technoblade*’, hovering over their owners’ heads. They look at each other, surprised, but both freeze, staring at something above Tommy.

He knows what he is going to see. Tommy still throws his head back. Letters of a nametag flicker with ten different colors per second and twist at weird angles, but it undeniably says, ‘*TommyInnit*’.

“You’ve got to be kidding me,” Phil’s voice falls.

Several things happen at once. Tommy bolts. The room bursts with noises. Something falls, knocked over in a hurry, a voice calls out to him – but Tommy hears none of it. His vision narrows down to one thing, one goal – escape. Reach the door. It doesn’t matter if it’s closed, he can slip through, he needs to *run* –

Writhing pain strikes him mid-flight. Tommy falls, crumbling to the floor. It burns and it *hurts* as if he is getting skinned alive. He gasps, curling up on himself. *Escape escape escape*, his instincts still pound. Through the agony, Tommy crawls, trying to drag his suddenly heavy body towards the door.

His mind is a blur. Tommy feels somebody touching him and flinches weakly as consciousness starts to slip away from him. He is turned over to his side. The last thing Tommy remembers is Phil’s wide eyes looming over him and trying to shield himself with his hands, and *then* –

Everything goes black.



Art by [Maltose](#)

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Also, shoutout to my discord server (kK tHe bAe especially, for the sword-stealing scene) for providing me with fluff ideas and hyping me up for the new chapters!

(Additional clarification: The book in the mailbox is Tommy's invitation for Big Innit hotel's opening he wrote not so long before he got locked up and killed in Pandora's Vault)

Forgiveness and healing

Chapter Summary

Tommy wakes up, and right away, with his eyes still closed shut and his chest rising slowly and even, he knows that something is wrong.

The exact reason slips away from his mind as he tries to pinpoint it, teasing him like a quirky butterfly - his head is full of these, colors bright and patterns swirly. Tommy instantly feels nauseous, even though he hasn't moved an inch since his awakening yet. He really wants to mentally flip off this shitty state and just go back to sleep, but the ringing voice of alarm in his head refuses to stop, so he sighs and rolls over on the bed.

Sharp pain shoots across his back. He freezes on his side, gasping for air. Each sharp inhale feels like a knife to his raw throat. The pain echoes through his body and sore muscles, but little by little, it settles down to a dull throb.

"F-fuck," Tommy mutters.

Wait.

That was not a caw.

Chapter Notes

TW: mention of death, non-graphic blood and injury. Most of that is in a big italics text block in the opening scene so just skip it over if you want!

Shotout to Ribbon for proof-reading this chapter and to my discord server for supporting me whole I wrote it. You guys are the best!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy feels like he is drowning, pushed around by ocean waves, but the salt water doesn't fill his lungs or burn him, just flows in and out as he breathes. His muscles are completely slack and even twitching an arm seems like an unnecessary waste of energy – giving in to the lazy currents is much less effort.

Not like Tommy *wants* to fight. It's quiet. Almost peaceful, with no sounds or light to disturb his senses, so Tommy allows himself to drift.

Until he no longer can.

Obsidian suffocates him in its deadly grip. Lava heats up the walls and the floor and squeezes the last bits of sweat out of him. A fountain of hot blood bursts through his sticky fingers as he desperately tries to stop the life flowing out of the wound.

All of that pain is nothing in comparison with the emptiness of realization that he is alone. Tommy is alone, trapped in that prison cell, while Dream smiles from a few feet away, knuckles bloody and bruised, he is alone when his fears threaten to swallow him whole, and the loneliest he is when he needs people to help him the most.

It was the way Tommy had to live, and it's going to be the way he dies.

Light breaks through the nightmare, and his wavering unconsciousness lifts up its veil to bring in muffled sounds, voices, colors and shapes moving faster than, in its hazy state, his brain can process. Tommy tries to blink them away and shrink back into the darkness, but it slips through his fingers like quicksand, leaving him lying there, confused and lost like a newborn kitten.

Few seconds' delay provided by the awakening prevented the pain from striking earlier, but now it comes flooding in all at once. It *hurts*, like Tommy is thrown on hot embers bare-back, forced to feel every single one pressing into his skin and burning through muscles and down to his bones. If he had any strength left in his body, he would've screamed. Now, Tommy only has the energy to part his lips, reach out for something – or someone – that isn't there, and whimper quietly in pain.

The voices fall silent. Tommy can hear his own breath now, small and wavering, and steps approaching him cautiously. It's hard to make out the words when the voices start talking again, keeping their tones low. Tommy doesn't recognize who they belong to. In the back of his mind, he is hoping that it's Tubbo that came to take him out of Pandora's Vault.

“-awake,” a male voice says.

Careful steps approach him. The surface under Tommy dips. Someone sits down beside him and takes his hand into their own, and Tommy weakly grips the calloused fingers back.

“It's too soon,” the voice says. “He needs some rest. A few days, maybe even a week.”

The air vibrates with uncertainty. Floorboards creak under someone's step. Tommy thinks that it sounds like clatter of hooves against wood.

“If you're just as terrible at your other duties as in making players respawn properly, then you shouldn't disappear from the rest of the server for too long,” another voice says. It's lower, rumbling, almost indifferent if it wasn't for an undertone lined with irritation, the type that arises with uneasiness and worry. “Just put him to sleep again, and we're going to handle the rest.”

Tommy lacks understanding of the words exchanged, but it makes images flash through his mind. Cracked porcelain mask. Broken lantern. Bleeding out on the obsidian floor. Tommy bites his lips deep enough to feel metallic taste on his tongue. No, he can't rest. If he succumbed to sleep, he'd risk never opening his eyes again.

His back still burns. Tommy can feel the skin, torn red and raw, tearing as he thrashes weakly. He manages to throw something off himself – it's a blanket, he thinks – but the heat doesn't become any less suffocating. If anything, it only further tightens its claws on Tommy's throat.

The room bursts into movement. Tommy hardly sees it through his half-closed eyelids, only feels someone catching him before he could fall over off the surface he has been sprawled on, “Calm down.”

Tommy tries to fight even as strong arms force him to lay back again to his side. “I don't want to die,” he whispers, barely louder than a breath.

“Oh,” the first voice says.

The grip on Tommy’s shoulders lessens. He is being passed from one pair of arms to another. Another whimper makes its way out of his lips as something weakly hits his back. The same voice shushes him, murmuring an apology, and brushes a hand between his shoulder blades. Where Tommy had expected it to flare with pain, his muscles relax against the soothing coolness of the touch. With the little control he has over his own body, he presses further into the hand. The man lifts him up a bit, and the next thing he knows, he is placed carefully on someone’s lap, and there are fingers running softly through his tangled hair.

“Sleep,” he says. “Get your rest. We’re not going to let anyone hurt you ever again.”

Tommy can’t help but listen to the voice. His eyelids slowly fall shut, and darkness blankets him as the hand on his head continues to ruffle through his hair. He is sure that none of this is real, that it’s just a feverish fantasy born from his desperation. But does it matter, in the end? He’s not alone, and the warmth of the touch feels so comforting that he succumbs to sleep faster than he can take another breath.

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"F-fuck," Tommy mutters.

Wait.

That was not a caw.

His eyelids feel like they are glued to each other. The newfound confusion and panic make Tommy force them open anyway and blink rapidly to adjust to the bright light. Maybe he is just hallucinating from the lack of human communication. Or that annoying bitch, his inner voice, just sounds too loud from how sleepy and tired he is. Yes, that has to be it. Tommy almost manages to calm himself down – that is, until his vision clears and he sees a hand in front of himself.

First few moments, Tommy only blinks. His brain feels like it’s working at a snail's pace. If there is a hand, it contemplates, then there should be a body attached to it. Or the other way around. Unless the hand got severed from the rest of the arm, which would've been quite a gory scene, but Tommy doesn't see any blood. A thin wrist bone covered by pale, brittle skin, long fingers – nothing too notable about the hand except for a large burn scar that looks like the owner had to shield himself from an explosion.

The hand is shaking. *I'm shaking*, Tommy thinks with detached irony. These are Tommy's hands, and so is the strange shudder that runs through his body when the realization starts settling in.

This is not another of his strange hallucinations. Everything feels too real: the softness of a bed under him, the ache of his sore back and neck, the heaviness in his limbs and blood rushing away from his head as he jerks up into a sitting position. The air on Tommy's face is cold without the feathers there to shield bare skin, but he still throws off the thick blankets covering him up to his shoulders, because he needs to see, he needs to make *sure* –

Tommy freezes. There are actual legs attached to his torso. No bird feet. No claws. Just normal lanky legs dressed into cargo pants. He wiggles his toes and can't help but stare at how easy they respond, like they haven't even been absent for an entire month.

His mind is still a blur, but bits and images are slowly dawning on him, and amongst them – a man with legs and antlers of a deer.

Callahan, *the admin*, has actually turned him back.

Tommy didn't want him to.

Tommy didn't *ask* for it.

And yet... For some reason, Tommy feels euphoric.

Someone is laughing. Tommy is laughing, hysterically, chuckling and wheezing, like a human, and not cackling with the weak imitation crow's vocal cords can provide. It feels harsh on his throat and he immediately topples over coughing. Tommy doesn't care. He relishes in the feeling, even, because each cough sends a shudder down his body that allows him to feel every inch of it responding, from tips of his fingers to the twitches and wincing of his face and limbs on his *back* –

Wait, *what?*

Tommy's mouth goes dry. Without turning his head, he concentrates on the strange sensation around his shoulder blades. The heaviness he initially felt on his back and brushed off as simple soreness is actually something more, something moving, tickling his skin in a way that seems foreign and all too-familiar at the same time.

Tommy slowly throws a look behind his back and yelps, "*What the fuck!*"

A pair of ink-blank wings beat in response. Tommy's attempt to jump away ends up with the appendages moving after him and slamming into a wall. The sting makes him pause, his mouth opening agape as he realizes that the wings are attached to him. That's not the only weird thing he sees – there is a fucking feathered tail sticking out from his lower back.

What the actual fuck.

Tommy reaches out a hand. The skin under black feathers is raw and sensitive to his touch. He is cautious, half-expecting the wing to shoot out and slap his face or try to strangle him – he knows it's a ridiculous thought, but to be honest, this entire situation is.

Tommy was a bird. And now he is back human again but not *quite*. Not with the wings and a tail growing out of his back, covered in fluffy black feathers with a slight blue tint to them.

Tommy tries to move one of the wings experimentally and fuck doesn't it feel odd. Sure, he did have wings as a bird, but they were like a substitute for arms, and these things... These are completely *new*.

"This is so weird," he breathes out into the empty room.

He didn't pay attention to where he was before. Now, recognizing the spruce furniture, the small attic window and pillows scattered around the bed, Tommy feels a pit growing in his stomach. This is Phil's house, Phil's bedroom. And *Phil*.... Phil and Techno were there when Callahan turned Tommy back into a human.

Tommy throws his legs off the bed and shoots upright. Or, more accurately, tries to, grabbing onto the nightstand and barely avoiding face planting on the floor. His balance is not just off. It's completely non-existent. *Fuck*, don't tell him he will have to relearn walking again. Tommy doesn't have the time for that shit. Phil can come any minute now, and when he does – Tommy's dead. Tommy's so dead because they know who he is, that he had lied to them, and they will not have mercy on a traitor and a spy.

Too late. Tommy almost throws himself out of the window when he hears the steps downstairs, but it's too small for him to fit through. He frantically looks around the room. It's almost empty save for the bed next to a wall, and without other options, he dives under the blankets.

Someone climbs the ladder. The trapdoor creaks, opening. Phil – Tommy knows it's him from the shuffle of the feathers and the pattern of his steps – climbs in.

"Hey, Tommy," Phil says. Tommy remains still, eyes closed. Phil waits a few seconds and adds, "I know you are awake, mate."

'I'm not,' Tommy wants to snarl. *'Fuck off.'*

He is shaking. Even under the blanket pulled up to his face, it's too obvious how his eyelids flutter and his chest rises and falls too often for a sleeping person.

Tommy already exposed himself. And he is not risking pissing off Phil when he is trapped in a room with no escape. Tommy slowly opens his eyes and pulls himself up on his arms. He avoids looking at Phil directly, only throwing a quick glance at his hands. He didn't bring in any weapons. If Tommy lunges quickly, surprising Phil, he might be able to win himself a few seconds to run.

Very funny, his inner voice quipps. *How are you going to run if you can't even stand upright?*

"How are you feeling?" Phil asks.

His voice is soft. Tommy can hear the familiar concern in it, the one that was directed at him many times as a crow. It pulls at his feelings and makes him want to reach out back. Tommy's wings flutter. He almost relaxes, almost opens his mouth to answer.

Almost. The lump in Tommy's throat prevents a whine from escaping, and his lips remain firmly shut.

Phil moves over. Tommy recoils. He doesn't know whether Phil notices, but he seems to walk slower as he approaches the nightstand and picks up a glass of water Tommy didn't previously notice standing there.

"You've been out for almost four days," Phil says, offering the water to him.

Tommy swallows thickly. It makes sense why his throat feels so raw, then. Tommy takes the glass gingerly, careful not to brush his fingers against Phil's – he suspects that even such mere touch would send him whining and chirping for comfort – and stares at it for a long moment.

The water could be poisoned. Or drugged. Or spit in – though the last one probably wouldn't kill him. The more reasonable part of Tommy's mind tells him that if Phil wanted him dead, he'd be a goner already. After all, Phil had four days to murder him while he was still unconscious and helpless. The only reason Tommy thinks he could be kept alive is an interrogation – to learn how much he overheard about the Syndicate and whatnot.

The thought makes Tommy gulp. The dryness of his mouth becomes too prominent. Tommy brings the glass to his lips, teeth clattering against it as he greedily downs the water in one go.

"I know you are probably confused and tired," Phil says. He sits down on the edge of the bed gingerly, hands on his lap. "Growing wings is painful, but you have been unconscious for the most of it."

Tommy puts the glass back on the nightstand and pulls his knees up to his chest. Wings awkwardly curl around him. Their weight is of weak comfort, especially when they move suddenly, on their own accord, and the ache of it startles him each time.

"It fucking hurts," he resorts on muttering.

Phil's frowns softly. "I can help, if you don't mind me taking a look."

There is a passing worried expression on Phil's face. It can't be real. Tommy is either imagining things or Phil is messing around with him by pretending to care. Phil knows, better than anyone, what the bird brain does to a person, and wants it hurt more when the masks finally fall and Tommy will have to face his real anger.

Tommy thinks it's working. He can't stop himself from nodding anyway.

Phil moves closer. Tommy flinches when a hand settles on the back of his neck, but melts into the touch instantly against his own will. His brain is a never-ending streak of *flock* and *safe* as it carefully moves down to the base of the wings – *his* wings. Phil presses his palm against the epicenter of the pain, rubs it into the stiff muscles until they relax and the ache soothes down.

"Better?" Phil asks.

Before Tommy can stop himself, he chirps back in response. It sounds cheerful. Grateful. He is quick to cover up his mouth with a hand, flustering with embarrassment, but Phil brightens up and rumbles back in response.

Somehow, it makes Tommy panic even more. How long is this act going to last for? When Phil is going to address the elephant in the room?

The avian is acting like nothing has changed, like Tommy is still the crow he sorts of adopted a few weeks ago. And he is not. He is not the fledgling Phil sheltered, but the enemy, the one obnoxious kid that was supposed to be dead long ago but is not due to some stupid inconvenience.

In a server full of people who hate Tommy, somebody is going to try and fix that mistake. He doesn't want it to be Phil who succeeds.

Phil tries to scoot closer, and Tommy whirls around, yanking the blanket off the bed and throwing it into the avian's face. The plan is for him to tackle Phil, but with the dizziness and black spots dancing in front of his eyes from the sudden movement, he ends up falling on him instead. Fuck it, it works. Phil yelps, hitting his head on the floor. Tommy shoves away the guilt, scrambles himself up and lunges for the trapdoor.

It's wide enough to fit Phil with his wings, so he slips through easily, jumping off the ladder and wincing as he hits his elbow on a shelf. The living room of the house is the same as he remembers it, but much smaller. Tommy makes it to the door in a rush of adrenaline, and notices Phil's trident leaning against a wall. He grabs it just as he hears Phil's voice from upstairs, "Tommy, wait!"

"Fuck off!" he yells back, throwing the door open and running outside.

Tommy uses the trident as a walking stick to keep himself from falling off the stairs. Carl is outside of his pen, saddled and tied up to a fence with a lead. Fucking finally, Tommy has some luck on his side.

Oh wait. *Shit*. If Carl is here, then Techno must have just returned – Tommy barely registers that thought before the doors of the two cabins open almost simultaneously.

"What is-" Techno starts, and trails off as he sees Phil's distressed figure.

Tommy doesn't wait to see how their interaction goes. Enchantments glint on the trident, and he slices the lead off with one swing. Tommy drops the weapon and throws himself into the saddle, kicking Carl with his heels, "Go!"

Red flashes in the corner of his vision. Techno throws himself over the railings. Tommy meets his eyes for a moment – frightened blue to wide crimson – and Carl takes off just a moment before Techno could catch the reins.

Carl breaks into gallop smoothly, carrying Tommy on his back.

Tommy likes to think he has quite an optimistic view of things, but he knows he isn't going to get too far away. The main area of the server is unreachable. Carl might be as fast as a Pegasus but he can't get him over the fucking ocean.

The portal, on the other hand, is too close. Phil and Techno would catch up to him with ender pearls and tridents and he is not bringing Carl into the Nether and risk them both falling into the lava.

Tommy's only other option is to set off into the wilderness. Get into the unexplored lands, far enough so that nobody would want to waste energy and time looking for him. Tommy doesn't know how long he is going to last there with no tools, food or resources whatsoever, but it isn't like he is given much of a choice. He has nowhere to go to, no one to offer him help or shelter – not this time. Tommy is truly and fully alone.

Getting upset over that is not going to get Tommy anywhere, however, especially when there is an active chase after him. Techno and Phil's cabins are long gone from his view but a flash of green or pink on the horizon pricks him with fear each time he throws a glance over his shoulder. Tommy has no plans of stealing Techno's horse. He has no plans of stealing anything, actually, he is just trying to fucking survive, so he will get away as far as he can before he will have to drop Carl.

He keeps nudging the horse to run faster and faster, muttering slurred apologies, until they are all but flying through the tundra. The burning heat of a body under Tommy is a stark contrast against the cold wind whipping his hair back into his face. Shivering and curling up into himself as much as his position allows him to, he belatedly realizes he is wearing just a shirt and pants and no shoes in an ever-winter biome. Great. Just as Tommy thought that his survival chances couldn't get any lower, they fell down through the fucking bedrock.

The adrenaline starts to wear off. His muscles ache from disuse. The air gets knocked out of his lungs on a particularly harsh jerk forward. Tommy wants to slump forward and hug Carl's neck in a desperate attempt to keep himself from falling off. It is painfully obvious he isn't going to hold on for much longer, so clenching his jaw tighter, he turns the horse towards the spruce forest ahead.

Tommy's destination is not that far deep in the woods, but he still makes Carl drop the speed a bit to maneuver between the trees. When a ravine comes into his view, he makes the horse run along the edge.

"Keep going," he says to Carl, leaning forward and patting his neck.

The horse flicks an ear at him. That's all confirmation Tommy needs. He braces himself, his wings tucking in behind his back on their own, and jumps out of the saddle.

His insides turn over as he falls. The feeling lasts a mere second after which Tommy's hunched form connects with the snow-covered ground and he rolls down the slope like a round cheese. The ravine is not that deep – it's more of a ditch, to be honest – but there are definitely going to be some new bruises on his arms and legs tomorrow. If he doesn't die of hypothermia before that, because it's fucking *freezing*. Tommy reaches the bottom, spitting snow and cursing under his breath as he pulls himself up on his elbows.

Carl storms by. Tommy can feel the ground shaking beneath his hooves. The thundering of his gallop becomes more and more distant until it trails off completely. Carl is smart; once he gets tired of running around aimlessly, he will find his way home. Or Techno and Phil will catch up to him before that, following his trail. Tommy has a bit of a headstart to get away while they haven't realized he is not in the saddle anymore.

He should be running now. Preferably with the speed of light or at least just stumbling through the snow, holding onto tree trunks and lower branches. Instead, Tommy can't bring himself to do as much as simply stand up. Now that he is not in immediate danger his body decided to remember that he hasn't eaten anything for almost four full days.

His body is shaking from exhaustion. Or from the cold. The snow actively melts and soaks his clothes; the wet fabric sticks to his skin and burns it with the contrasting temperature. In the end, it's what makes Tommy push through the ache of his muscles and force himself up into a sitting position.

Tommy looks around. There is a sprawling spruce tree growing nearby, its lower branches almost touching the snow. Some cover is better than no cover at all, Sun Tzu would probably say. Without much thought, Tommy crawls under the tree. A few of his feathers get caught on the needles, but it's the last thing he cares about right now.

Slumping next to the trunk, he takes a deep breath. Tommy curls up his wings around himself as much as he can, pulling his knees up and tucking them under his chin. With every second the ache of his muscles relaxes a bit. They are not burning anymore; it's cold and... That's about it, actually. Tommy is just cold. And very, very fucking tired.

Maybe he can take a quick rest. Let his eyelids close for just a minute. Phil and Techno are still probably too far away, and Tommy doesn't think he could get up and walk even if he wanted to.

Some sleep sounds nice.

Tommy dozes off.

Tommy wakes up to something biting his finger.

His head feels heavy. His body is still cold. Napping did not magically fix all of his problems like he had hoped it would, and Tommy contemplates going back to sleep, but whatever animal or insect decided to disturb him, it's a very stubborn one. Each of his fingers gets bitten at least once until Tommy's eyelids flutter open and meet an accusing gaze of black beady eyes.

Oh.

Shit.

"Bitch, is that you?" Tommy rasps.

The crow stares at him with a look that nearly screams, *'Seriously? Bitch? Couldn't you come with anything better?'* but caws in a familiar low voice. Last time Tommy checked, he was not a Disney princess, and the crow perching on his knee clearly shows no signs of fear or wariness around him. A quick friendly nibble after, she jumps off and walks on the snow.

Tommy follows her and climbs out of the shelter of the spruce tree. Last time he was in a similar situation, he had to be forcefully dragged out of his cover. There is probably something poetic about the fact he is coming out on his own this time. Or ironic. Tommy feels too shitty to bother with thinking about it.

Two crows land on his shoulders. Tommy genuinely expects them to start pecking at his eyes or some shit, and is surprised when Prick head-butts him with a grumpy sounding caw and Pussy picks on his hair.

"You recognize me," he says. "You actually recognize me, you feathered little bastards."

Tommy smiles. He just can't help it, especially when Pussy brushes a wing past his cheek, tickling it.

Bitch, the menace, lands on his head. Tommy yelps and tries to shoo her off – but to no avail, sharp claws only dig further into the roots of his hair. Bitch refuses to let go even as Prick and Pussy caw at her in a clearly upset manner. Watching them argue and bicker around, Tommy can't stop himself from smiling.

"You have no idea how happy I am," Tommy says.

Fuck, he'd hug them all one by one if he had the time for it. Which he unfortunately didn't.

"I have a mad suggestion. How about you run away with me?" Tommy says. The crows fall silent. Bitch hops over on his hand, and he lowers her to his own eye level. "Imagine, just the four of us - out of this fucking server and on a wild adventure."

The crows don't seem to like that idea. Prick sends him an unimpressed look, and Pussy tilts her head. Tommy sighs. "Can I at least count on you not to report to Phil about me?" he asks.

The birds stare back at him. If crows could look apologetic, then Pussy probably did. The answer is a clear no, and Tommy knows that a second before the crows take off into the sky with thundering caws. Calling for someone. Giving up his location.

Fucking *traitors*.

He picks up a random fallen branch that looks strong enough to act as a walking stick, and forces his stiff body to straighten. Tommy has a strong feeling that if he falls again, he will not be able to stand back again. His body is barely functioning at this point: he can't feel his fingers anymore. It's not frostbite, not yet, but he's keeping an eye on his hands and toes - he gained wings, yes, but he's not planning on losing a couple of limbs in exchange.

Shit. *Wings*. Tommy almost managed to forget about them. He spreads them as wide as he can and scans them with a criticizing look. Tommy's wings are three quarters of the size of Phil's, at the very best. A few experimental flaps don't make him soar into the air like he'd hoped to, but the first time he flew as a crow it wasn't from the ground, either.

Perhaps he needs some height to start off.

Tommy grits his teeth and holds onto the stick harder as he walks. He can feel the pound of blood in his ears. The urge to wipe away the sweat from his forehead and slap himself a couple times is strong, but the rising fear washes it all over when he hears steps - someone running towards him, speeding up fast. In the distance, he can hear his name being called.

Shit. Fuck. He didn't think that Phil is *this* close. Adrenaline kicks in again. Tommy stumbles, balancing himself out with the makeshift staff, and runs, as fast as his body can manage. Wings are of little help. Tommy doesn't understand what to do with them so they just awkwardly hang behind his back like a dead weight. They fight against air and act like a parachute except Tommy doesn't want to open them and they wouldn't fucking *fold*.

"I'm going to shred you for rags, you dumb bitches," he mutters.

A few days ago – or a week, Tommy supposes, since he was unconscious for so long – he flew above this forest, investigating. A hill growing out of the spruce treetops didn't seem too high for him then. Now that he has to walk up the snowy slope, feeling each step echo with pain in his legs, Tommy knows better.

Phil's voice is louder and louder each second. By the time he reaches the top of the hill, he can hear the snow crunching under someone's feet, rustle of feathers and someone's frantic breathing.

"Tommy, stop!" Phil yells.

Tommy does not stop.

He walks over to the very edge, spreads his wings *and* –

Snaps them back shut, stumbling away.

It's *high*. Possibly three, if not four times higher than the cliff Tommy fell off from as a crow. If he fails to get it on the first try, he won't get away with just a broken wing. He will be just a fucking *puddle* somebody will have to scramble off the ground.

Phil is here. Tommy feels his presence even before he whirls around and gazes of blue eyes meet each other. He is trapped, on the edge. No weapons, no energy left to fight. Tommy is dead. He is dead and Phil will make sure that he doesn't come back this time.

Tommy is weak.

Tommy is pathetic.

But he doesn't want to die from Phil's hands.

Phil makes a step towards him, a strange expression on his face, and Tommy blurts out, "I'm sorry."

"You're sorry... for what?" Phil asks, and he *stops*.

Hope flares in Tommy's chest. "For eavesdropping on the Syndicate meeting," he quickly elaborates. "And for lying to you, too. I didn't mean to – I *tried* telling you, several times, but you didn't understand, none of you did – and I meant none of it, really. I didn't mean to turn into a crow, or spy on you, or use your kindness. I swear I fucking didn't –"

Tommy stops to take a deep breath. Phil's eyes are widening, and he can't tell if that's a good sign or not. It's too late to chicken out anyway, so he continues, a bit slower this time, "If you let me go right now, I'm not going to tell anyone anything. Fuck, I am going to ask Callahan to turn me back into a crow again – I wanted to do that, anyway. Nobody needs to know that I'm not dead, and I will leave, and I swear I won't bother any of you ever again."

Tommy's speech dies out. He keeps his eyes trained on the ground for a long moment of silence between them. Finally, Tommy's nerves snap. He dares to look into Phil's face, and swallows hard at the expression of horror on it.

"None of that was your fault, Tommy," Phil takes a hold of his voice and his expressions, managing them down to something akin to sympathy. "I'm not mad at you. Techno is not, either."

Tommy opens his mouth, but no words come out.

"You're not?" he sounds like a confused child.

Phil shakes his head.

"But –" Tommy stutters. "Why did you chase me, then?"

Phil glances at Tommy's hands, angry red from the cold, covered in fresh bruises and cuts, and at his thin shivering form. "We were worried about you."

Words struck Tommy like lightning. He didn't expect to hear that - not from Phil, not about himself. "Why would you be worried about me?" he asks, dumbfounded.

Now it's Phil's turn to be confused. "What do you mean, why? You died, spent a month trapped in a bird's body, and grew wings right after you were turned back –"

"So?" Tommy interrupts.

Phil's wings flutter behind his back. "So?" he echoes. "You're not okay, Tommy. You need help."

Tommy flinches like he has been hit. In a way, Phil's words really slapped him harder than a death threat ever could, because he is *right*. Tommy is not okay. He has been furthest possible from okay for as long as he can remember himself – even if it's not that long now that his memory is all a blur.

He wants to believe that the care in Phil's voice is real. Tommy reaches out to it with his entire being and he hates himself for it, because it hurts all the more to accept that it's all an *act*. A trick.

"Stop that," he snarls weakly. "Stop trying to lie to me."

"I'm not lying, Tommy," Phil frowns.

Tommy laughs tiredly in his face. "I called for you in prison, you know, when I got locked up with Dream," he says. "Screamed even when I knew that nobody would come. And then I *died*. And at the Syndicate meeting - you cheered for my death. You were happy that I died," Tommy sucks in a shaky breath. "And now, you're *worried* about me. Why did you suddenly – what changed?"

"Tommy -" Phil takes a step forward, and Tommy takes one back. Phil stops with his hands raised and expression soft and heartbroken at the same time. "I would never be happy for your death. I didn't believe that you died, and brushed off Ranboo's words - and for that, I'm sorry. You have no idea how much I regretted that later, after speaking with Sam."

Tommy thought that he couldn't fear any colder than he already is. He clearly has been wrong. The sincerity in Phil's words strikes Tommy, planting the seeds of doubt in his anger. "Is that why you left me with Techno?" he mutters, voice suddenly small.

Phil nods. "Four days ago, I went to the prison to talk to him. He confirmed your death to Techno already, but I needed to make sure." Phil takes a deep breath. "And Sam... He was sure that you died, so told me about what Dream did to you. During the exile."

Memories that seemed to turn into one blurry fog started to move, to form into explosions of iron, into smiling faces and fake sweet words. No. No, no, no. "Do not talk to me about the exile," Tommy says, voice threatening to trail high. "I don't want to think about it."

"But you need to," Phil says softly.

Tommy clamps hands over his own ears. "No, I don't. I can forget it. I almost did, and then you had to fucking - why did you remind me?"

"You can't avoid these memories, Tommy. You can only learn to process them and to heal."

Deep inside, Tommy knows that Phil is right. The reason why he was so fast to accept his fate as a crow was that he considered it an easy escape. When there is a whole fucking train of stuff you're afraid of dealing with, the only thing you want is to leave it all behind and start anew. With his memory fading and the server sure of his death, Tommy had a chance to do that in more ways than just the metaphorical one.

Tommy is scared, and tired, and so, *so* lost.

"I can help you," Phil says, and steps forward. Tommy doesn't move, hugging himself, and Phil continues approaching. "I want to help you," he stresses. "If you can forgive me and allow me to."

Tommy doesn't know what to say. It's the words that he wanted to hear all along, but now that they echo in his ears, and Phil's reaching out to him – it feels like another of his foolish fantasies.

Except this time, it's real. The concern, the care, and the hand that is extended to him in the darkness he wandered around for so long, and yet – It's a huge risk. Tommy has been on this bridge before, where the person on the other end can betray him and cut it off at any moment. The details slip away, but Tommy doesn't need them to hear the voice of alarm muttering its warnings.

Trust. A brittle word for a brittle thing. Tommy hands it over so easily and always has to glue the shards afterwards.

Perhaps, he can give it one last try.

He steps forward. And then he slips.

Tommy falls backwards, the swing of his arm slicing air too far away from the edge, and finds himself plummeting down the cliff. Time seems to slow down as dread fills his limbs with ice.

There is a startled scream, and a screech - and then Phil leaps after him. Diving forward, he grabs Tommy. They spin around as they fall, and Phil spreads his wings. Wind doesn't catch as strong on the wing with damaged primary feathers and they are thrown off the balance harshly.

That's the only thing it took for Tommy's instincts to kick in. His wing, not trapped in the clasp of Phil's arms, snaps open. It's not a graceful glide by any means. It's not a glide at all. Two feathered crow wings - one Tommy's, the other Phil's - barely slow down their fall.

Tommy expects an awful crunch of a snapping bone. Eyes closed, heart pounding in his ears, he doesn't register that they have landed until a hand settles down between his wings.

"I've got you," Phil murmurs.

He is close. Too close. Arms wrapped tightly around Tommy and basically breathing into the wet and tangled mess of his hair. It's not the bird instincts that make him lean back into the contact and not his normal brain either. Instead, it's just Tommy. Tommy, who is not a crow, and not a human, either. Just a lonely, tired soul, longing for someone to care about him.

"You should be more careful on the edges till you learn to fly," Phil says.

Tommy's surprise makes him pull away. "What?" he croaks.

"To fly," Phil repeats, running a hand down his wing, rearranging the weirdly sticking out feathers. Tommy chirps. A fond glance and a barely contained smile brighten up Phil's face. Tommy dips his head and hides his face in the avian's shoulder.

"Bullshit," he mutters. "I already know how to fly."

"As a crow, yes," Phil agrees. "But as an avian, you have a lot to learn. You can stay at my house, and I will teach you everything you need to know."

It is not a statement but a carefully extended offer. Phil sounds like he is afraid that Tommy will decline it. He wouldn't be, if he knew at least the tenth part of what is happening in the boy's brain. Tommy's heart threatens to break through his ribs at any moment. He wants to say yes, to nod, yet he can't help but listen to the uneasiness stirring in his chest.

"But what about Techno?" he asks. "Wouldn't he be against it?"

"I don't mind."

Tommy whips around in Phil's arms and finds Techno standing a dozen feet away from them, leading Carl by his reins. How didn't Tommy hear them approaching? Startled, he shoots up to his feet and growls.

Techno's sword stays at his hip. His hands are raised to hover at his chest level. Tommy studies his unmasked face for any sign of aggression or anger and finds none.

"Don't tell me you've experienced a change of heart, too," Tommy hisses.

Techno looks unimpressed. "Believe it or not, I have a conscience," he says. "And it has been eating at me quite a lot ever since one of my friends died, especially when there was a very obnoxious bird who reminded me of him to a painful degree."

Oh.

Here goes that awful feeling that makes everything inside him flutter with hope and shiver with fear at the same time.

"Did you," Tommy swallows thickly. "Miss that friend?"

"Seriously?" Techno raises a brow. "You're going to make me say it?"

"Well, I don't know," Tommy snarls. "It didn't seem like you cared too much when Ranboo said I got beaten up to death."

Phil stands up behind him and puts a hand on his shoulder. Tommy's anger levels out a bit, while Techno's expression turns contrastingly sour and then straight up painful. Tommy expects to get insulted or perhaps to get a half-hearted excuse. What he absolutely does not expect is for Techno to approach him, staring with serious eyes, and say, "For all it's worth, I'm sorry."

"*What?*" Tommy says.

"I had a lot of time to think about Lmanburg and Doomsday," Techno hums. "And while I don't regret what I did in the slightest, I acknowledge that you're allowed to have your own opinions. I was angry when I said that I," he stutters, quickly correcting himself. "— you know, what I said. But it wasn't true."

Tommy stands there, shocked, as Techno takes off his cape, and it settles down as a heavy but comforting weight on his shoulders. It's so fucking warm that Tommy can't help but curl up into it tighter, burying his face into the fluffy furs even as confusion still clogs his brain.

"It's the first and the last time I'm ever willingly saying this," Techno adds, voice trailing off into soft rumble, "But I did miss you, Theseus."

Silence.

And then, "Am I dreaming?" Tommy says, dumbfounded.

Phil bursts laughing.

"Yes you are," Techno says. "None of this has actually happened, and when you wake up, we can go back to hating each other again."

“Fuck you, bitch!” Tommy immediately yells. Techno gets punched in his chest and doesn’t even wince, the prick. Tommy cusses, rubbing his fist, and feels Phil’s hand on his shoulder.

"We will figure it out," he says.

It sounds like a promise, and Tommy believes it. He believes it with his entire soul and lets the timid flower of trust between them to place its roots.

Techno tugs Carl closer. Phil helps Tommy to get into the saddle.

"Let's go home," Phil says.

Chapter End Notes



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Extra notes:

1) I doubted my characterization of Techno in this for a while but the Technowill lore dropped just at the perfect time and it was a confirmation I needed to give a green light for the Technosoft moment :3

2) A lot of you have guessed Tommy getting crow wings. Yes it was the plan from the very beginning, but none of you even assumed he could get a tail so I'm getting extra points for being uNpREdiCTAbLe :D

Déjà vu

Chapter Summary

First hints of a dawn prickle at the horizon. Tommy knows, in a way that he can't quite explain, that this is his last time visiting the field. Flowers will fade, the winds will go still, and the rising sun will mark the moment he'll finally be alive *and* free.

"Thank you," Tommy says. "For bringing me back, and everything after that."

Callahan nods. Tommy takes a couple of steps forward, flexes his wings in preparation for flight. Before he takes off the ground, however, he turns to admin with a determined expression on his face.

"I have one last favor to ask you for," Tommy says.

Chapter Notes

Get your happy ending losers /j

Huge shoutout to Mellodi for beta-reading!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The first thing Phil does when they return to the cottage is try and warm Tommy up.

Tommy tries to protest, insisting that he is fine, and that he isn't that cold to begin with, but Techno grabs his hand and wordlessly shoves it into his own face. Forced to stare at fingertips tinted white and blue, Tommy finally groans his agreement and allows himself to be seated in front of the fireplace.

It's weird. The fact that he is in Phil's house, in all his whole TommyInnit glory. There is no sword digging into his throat, no death threats or harsh words thrown his way, and the guilt swollen deep within his chest replaced with something warm and blooming.

Techno doesn't ask for his cape back. Tommy decides to keep it for now. Phil smothers him with blankets on top of it, until he is drowning in them, only his face and hands peeking out of layers and layers of thick soft coverings.

Great. Now he is an avian burrito.

Tommy moves his wings, trying to get them into a more comfortable position, "I'm getting that weird sensation where you fucking feel like, you know, you have already been in the same situation before," he scrunches up his face, "Deje – *dejevor* or something like that."

“Déjà vu,” Techno corrects him, throwing an extra log into the fireplace. Tommy watches it get swallowed in red flames and leans forward to get the heat wash over his cold cheeks.

“Well, it’s *dejevor* now, bitch,” he announces.

Techno throws him a pointed look. “And that is because...?”

“Because I said so.”

Techno sighs deeply and sinks into an empty armchair. “You never change, do you?”

“What do you mean?” Tommy yelps. “I’ve spend a literal month in the body of a fucking *bird*.”

“You were still *Tommy* as a bird, though,” Techno points out. “Stealing my apples, getting on people’s nerves and, you know, being a general nuisance. Ten out of ten on the Tommy scale.”

Tommy manages to wiggle out one of his wings out of the blankets’ trap and smacks Techno, “Then why didn’t you recognize me sooner, you prick?”

That gets Techno to shut up. He makes a face that Tommy can best describe as something in-between of angry and embarrassed. “I know like I *should* have,” Techno says, “and somehow still didn’t. To be honest, it makes me feel kind of stupid.”

From the kitchen, Phil comes, a steaming bowl in his hands. He passes it to Tommy. Now that his teeth aren’t clanging against each other and his hands don’t shake from the cold, he has the time to acknowledge the twists and wrenches of his empty stomach. It’s almost disappointing to find the bowl to be filled to the brim with cloudy broth.

“I want a mug of hot chocolate after that,” Tommy says. More like demands, really. Phil, dropping on the couch next to him, tilts his head.

“You haven’t eaten anything for days, mate. It would just make you sick.”

“Greedy, greedy Phil,” Tommy’s tone is nothing if not accusing. “At this point you’re just making up excuses not to share your hot chocolate supplies with me.”

Tommy ends up downing the broth, anyway. And braces himself to ask the question that buzzes in the back of his mind throughout their journey back to the Arctic commune.

“Does anybody else know that I’m alive?”

Techno blinks slowly and leaning back in his armchair. “Nobody besides me, Phil, Callahan and also Ranboo.”

“Ranboo?” Tommy says, uneasiness settling in his stomach. “Why him?”

“Well, for one, the guy literally lives next door. It would be hard to hide something from him even if we wanted to.”

“If you wanted to?” Tommy echoes.

He hasn’t realized that his shoulders spiked up to his ears until he feels the grounding weight of Phil’s hand. Oh so slowly, Tommy relaxes into the touch. He raises his gaze and meets the sympathetic expression on Phil’s face.

“Your death hit Ranboo hard,” Phil says. “He was very happy to learn that you’re alright.”

Tommy squirms uncomfortably in his seat. He thinks back of what happened in Snowchester and a lump arises in his throat. “Really?” he says, voice small.

Techno raises a brow. “Why are you so surprised? Aren’t you two friends or something?”

“I don’t know,” Tommy answers honestly. And when Techno and Phil share a confused look, he adds, “I don’t remember.”

“Is there anything else you don’t remember?” Phil asks, frowning.

A part of Tommy is reluctant to talk. His memory is a weakness, and weaknesses are not to be spilled in front of your enemies.

But these are not Tommy’s enemies. They are family, and family is where you allow yourself to be weak and vulnerable.

“I’ve lost some of my memories while I was a crow.” Tommy grimaces. “First skills. Then the details of older memories. Now I can recall a flash of colors here, a few faces there. Nothing in-between, and everything is very fuzzy.”

His wings flutter against his own will. Tommy tries to press down their movement and the best he manages is to make them curl around himself protectively, shielding him from gazes barring into him heavily as the realization settles in.

Where Tommy expects to see pity, he meets only soft concern. “Callahan said he’d be around the main area from now on. We can talk to him about it tomorrow,” Phil says. “Until then, don’t worry about it.”

Phil is careful as he puts a hand over his wing and guides it down until it’s loosely folded behind his back. His own, larger feathers cover over Tommy’s shoulders and side. Fuck. That sets off Tommy’s bird brain again. Rumbles and chirps make their way out of his lips as he involuntarily leans into the touch.

A moment later, he is all but slumping down Phil’s arm. Gently, careful of still-irritated skin on Tommy’s back, he is lowered into a half-sitting, half-laying position. Huh. Well, it’s not *that* bad. Especially with a hand absently brushing through his feathers.

“I don’t think I want to announce my return to the rest of the server yet,” Tommy says, staring into the ceiling.

“It’s okay, mate,” Phil pulls out a loose feather. Tommy barely feels the pull of it but the uncomfortable itching feeling is gone. “Take as much time as you need to be ready.”

“I’m not sure if I am ever going to be,” Tommy admits. His voice comes out quiet, barely louder than the dying creaks of the wood in the fireplace, and he squirms a bit in his position, trying to twist his head to an angle where he can look into Phil’s face. “Does it make me a pussy?”

To his surprise, it’s Techno who answers this time. “Being afraid doesn’t make you a coward,” he says, leaning forward and putting his elbows on his knees. “Nobody heals in one day, after all.”

His voice is a deep rumble. Orange and yellow patches of light reflecting from the fire make his expression look almost soft. His words sound like an echo of something else, of something that came

long before and carved out a hole in Tommy's heart that remained painfully empty to this day.

He may not remember every memory shared with Techno, but the feelings are still there, and they make him yearning even for mere hints of fondness and affection. That urge to be closer, to be welcomed, states the undeniable truth: Tommy missed Techno more than he'd like to admit.

It's a crow that can get away with being clingy and not be rejected or make others feel embarrassed. This is a situation where Tommy would like to have his small animal privileges back because his bird instincts want a hug from Techno. Badly.

Tommy drops his head into his hands.

"You alright, mate?"

"I'm fine," Tommy mutters back. "Just the bird shit getting at me again."

He has been an avian for a grand total of four days as opposed to Phil, who always had his wings and is literally centuries old, and Techno, his closest companion. Both know more about avian mind and instincts a shit ton more than he does. Tommy feels his ears burning when they exchange a knowing look and Phil coughs as if trying to bring Techno's attention to something.

"No," Techno dismisses.

"Techno," Phil says, tone almost scolding.

"I said, no."

"Come on, mate. Just look at him."

Tommy snarls without any real heat behind it. He may look like an abandoned puppy, especially with his wings dropping low and a sad trill rumbling in his throat, but he is done with people ignoring his presence.

"Excuse me," he says. "I'm right fuckin' here. What are you two even on about?"

"Nothing," Techno says, standing up. "I'll pour myself some tea."

Techno rounds the armchair and the couch. Tommy presses down a disappointed chirp. It's fine. It's not like he *really* wanted that hug, anyway.

Tommy blinks when a warm palm brushes his hair. It's a mere ruffle, a ghost of affection on Techno's side, but to Tommy, it feels like everything. The touch is gone as suddenly as it appeared. Tommy cranes his neck and sees Techno's broad back disappearing in the kitchen doorway. He returns a minute later, a mug in hand, and face as indifferent as always.

Passing by, Techno pretends he did not ruffle Tommy's hair.

In return, it's hard for Tommy to pretend he did not like it when his bird brain is singing fucking *serenades* in delight, and he can't help but caw questioningly at Techno.

"You tell anybody about this and I will murder you, no questions asked," Techno deadpans, taking a sip out of his mug. Tommy suspects he only did it so that he could hide his own rumble, a deep, contented sound.

Tommy shares a look with Phil. “*I don’t think he will,*” Tommy’s wordlessly says.

“*No he won’t,*” Phil’s face confirms.

Between Techno leaning back in his armchair, relaxed and eyelids half-closed, and Tommy still clinging to Phil, the room is swallowed in silence.

Usually, Tommy would try to break it. By being louder, by being so bold that people wouldn’t have any other choice but turn their attention to him, he makes himself be heard and known.

Ironically, it’s one of Tommy’s traits that harmed him the most in the long term. When they were unnecessary, he only annoyed others out of their minds. But when Tommy was slowly dying, drowning in the ocean of his own fears, his cries for help were swallowed by the void of ignorance.

These days are now long done. In this comfortable silence, his every whisper would be listened to, his every word understood and accepted. It’s a silence that Tommy chooses, for he knows that he doesn’t need to scream anymore.

From the crackle of the fire, from the rustle of feathers of the wings wrapped around him, from the bristle of the snow outside and dying sunlight spilling through the windows – Tommy learns again what it’s like to feel happy.

Every good thing comes to an end, however. A faint voice of alarm at the back of his mind takes over the simpler, instinctual part. Tommy pulls away from Phil, swallowing down a sad caw arising from the loss of contact. “How long?” he asks.

Phil’s hand, rubbing comforting circles into his back, pauses for a bit. “How long... what?”

“How long am I allowed to stay here?”

Tommy thinks he stops breathing in the short moment he waits for an answer. Phil’s eyes widen with realization and the glint of sadness in them is all-too clear for Tommy to see. The fingers rearranging the feathers on his wing disappears. He chases after the touch subconsciously and only gets distracted by Phil’s calloused hands gripping his own.

“Mate,” Phil says. “Nobody is going to make you leave unless you want to.”

Tommy opens his mouth. Nothing comes out except for a strangled confused sound. Questioning. *Hopeful.*

Phil did offer him shelter. Tommy had wanted, of course, but he didn’t think Phil would *actually* –

Tommy stiffens. “Are you sure?”

The grip on his hands tightens a bit, but there isn’t as much restraint about it as there is reassurance, a wordless promise. “This place is now as much your home as it is mine.”

Tommy stares into Phil’s face, studying every shift and twitch of his expressions. Looking for a slightest hint of a lie, for a malice intent or mockery behind clear blue eyes.

Instead, Phil looks at Tommy with fondness and warmth. It’s hard to believe that it’s actually directed at him, but then he is pulled into a hug again.

Flock. Tommy feels safe, encased in giant black wings. *Family.* He can both hear and feel the purrs vibrating in Phil's chest.

Parent, Tommy's head pounds. A whine breaks through his sealed lips.

"Easy, mate," Phil says.

That is the final straw. The burning sensation prickling at Tommy's eyes reaches its peak. He brings a hand to his face and feels something wet on his fingers.

Oh. These are *tears.*

Tommy couldn't cry when he was angry, he couldn't cry when he was sad.

The tears only came when Tommy felt happy and there was someone else to witness them.

Tommy hurries to hide his face in Phil's shoulder, but it's already too late. Techno's eyes are open, and he quirks a brow at him mockingly.

"I'm not crying," Tommy snaps.

Tears stack up like hours of sleep, apparently. They keep spilling and staining his cheeks no matter how hard he tries to wipe them out.

"Sure you aren't," Techno puts his mug onto a coffee table. "This is just your eyes inconveniently turning into waterfalls."

Tommy feels his ears reddening. He wiggles out of Phil's arms to flip Techno off. "Fuck you, Techno," he says. And then he pulls up Techno's cape closer to his face and blows his nose into it.

Tommy sees the exact moment Techno's soul leaves his body. A look of disgust so intense would throw anybody off. Anybody *but* Tommy. He only makes sure to wipe at his face even more intensely and stares proudly at the Mona Lisa of tears and snot he created on previously perfectly clean, rich red fabric.

"Have fun washing that, bitch."

"You know, I liked you like a crow a lot more," Techno declares.

"Oi you, dickhead!" Tommy screeches. "*Asshole, bitch, prick* – "

Swears continue to spill and flow from Tommy's mouth even as Techno hits a bullseye on him with a pillow. The second one he dodges like a pro and it headshots Phil instead. Yelping, the avian shoots upright, only to get smacked by Tommy's wing. The room would turn into a full-on pillow fight if it wasn't for the sudden knock at the door.

It opens without any warning. A disheveled white-and-black head peeks in through the slit. Ranboo looks guilty, like a dog about to be scolded for ruined furniture. "Uh, Phil, I'm sorry, but – " the anxious speech comes to a halt when his gaze falls on the two avians frozen in the middle of the room. Ranboo lets out a soft warble, "Tommy –"

The door slams open.

Tubbo walks through the doorway, with his eyes shining bright and face skewed with fury. Tommy watches, mouth agape, as Techno tries to block his way, and gets fucking *shoved* into a wall.

And then that five and a half feet of pure muscle and determination meet eyes with him.

Oh fuck.

Tommy is about to get murdered by his own best friend.

He doesn't have the time to do as much as squeak when Tubbo comes charging at him. Instead of getting dropkicked or punched like he had expected, two strong arms wrap around him. In a hold so tight that Tommy struggles to breathe, he doesn't immediately recognize that he is getting hugged.

Tommy feels confused. Whatever he expected from Tubbo's reaction to him being alive – he hadn't expected *this*.

Hoped, maybe. But Tommy was too afraid of ignorance or rejection to let himself believe, even for a second, that Tubbo would be happy to get him back.

Feeling something wet on his shoulder, Tommy thinks that might have been a mistake. He returns the hug back. Tommy's voice betrays him, so he mutters quietly, "Hi, Tubso."

Tubbo goes slack in his hold. Tommy's wings encase them into a warm cocoon. It's awkward, for that he doesn't know how to position them so that Tubbo wouldn't get buried whole under the black feathers, but it's the last thing either of them cares about.

Tubbo is shaking.

Tommy's eyes are burning again.

Tubbo can't see it, but Phil throws him a concerned look. Tommy shakes his head – he is fine. How is he supposed to explain the tight wrench in his chest that makes him gasp for air?

Relief can be a powerful emotion. With Tubbo's death grip on him relaxing slowly, Tommy closes his eyes and exhales with relief stronger than he ever felt in his entire life.

He isn't hated.

He wasn't replaced.

Tommy feels stupid for doubting their friendship. He cracks an eye open and sees Ranboo smiling at him, awkward but genuine, though his ears flicker anxiously at Techno peeling himself off a wall and crossing his arms.

His pride must be in shambles after being tossed like this by *Tubbo* of all fucking people. Phil's face is a silent plea for him not to make a scene out of it right now. Techo grabs his mug and walks towards the kitchen with an *'I'm going to need something much stronger than tea for this'* kind of expression.

Tommy cackles out a laugh. Tubbo raises his head from his shoulder. "If you disappear like this one more time," he mutters into Tommy's ear. "I'm going to kill you myself."

"I'm not planning to go anywhere," he squeezes Tubbo harder. And to everyone in this room and the server and *himself*, he adds, "I'm back. For real this time."

When Tommy falls asleep, the first thing he hears is the sound of a train coming.

He thinks he might have imagined it, though, because the next moment he is surrounded, once again, by a field of flowers.

This time, there are no dead bodies swallowed by blooming poppies, and the sun is not painting the sky in the color of Tommy's blood. Instead, it's a quiet night, with rustling grass and golden stars woven into a void meadow stretched above his head.

A deer stands in the middle of it all, waiting for someone to arrive. Tommy's black shadow dives down – he is a bird as he flies, a human as he falls, but the moment his feet touch the ground, the wings sprout from his back and wrap around him in a comfortable blanket.

Callahan is not a deer anymore, either. The way his head tilts make it seem like the moon got tangled in the massive antlers, but the eyes that bore into him are human, and so is the gesture of a hand suggesting Tommy to take a walk with him.

"Are you going to keep invading my dreams?" Tommy bluntly asks, stumbling after him.

"You're the one who wanted to see me this time."

Tommy jumps and clasps hands over his own ears. The voice comes from everywhere and nowhere at the same time, and it sounds like his own voice reading from a fucking audiobook or a text message.

"What the fuck?" he yelps. "Did you hear that, too?"

Callahan tilts his head at him with a look of amusement on his face. Tommy understands that not only Callahan heard the voice but he was the one talking. In Tommy's head. In Tommy's *voice*.

"That's fucking creepy," Tommy informs him.

"It's easier this way." Callahan shrugs.

His words startle Tommy despite him knowing what to expect. Fuck. It's going to be hard to get used to this. Tommy swallows hard and wipes away at the sweat running down his forehead. "Whatever," he says. "I wanted to talk to you about my memory issues."

Callahan looks at him in a way that makes it immediately obvious that he knows what Tommy is talking about, so he doesn't bother with a long explanation. Tommy picks up the closest flower he can find – a white daffodil – and twists the delicate stem between his fingers. "Are these memories... I'm going to remember everything eventually, right?"

"With enough dedication, perhaps, some of your memories will return."

Something inside of Tommy turns upside down. "What do you mean, *some* of my memories?"

"It means that the memory damage is partially permanent," Callahan says, not in the least bothered by the drop of Tommy's voice. *"Some of your skills will need some rewinding, too."*

Tommy feels very tempted to clench the flower in his hand and throw it away, but the poor plant is not to blame on the fact that certain people are very shit at their jobs.

“With Dream as the only other admin we could compare you to, the bar was so fuckin’ low,” Tommy’s head falls into his hands. “And you still managed to break right through it.”

Callahan pats his shoulder sympathetically. Tommy doesn’t jerk away from the touch, but it does, combined by his own incidental mention of Dream, make uneasiness twist his stomach. Now that there are at least five people on the server know that he is alive, it is only a matter of time till the news spreads.

Tommy trusts Phil and Tubbo, Techno, and even Ranboo, but he knows that he won’t be able to hide forever. Obsidian and blackstone walls might be strong enough to hold Dream in but even they have their mouths and ears.

Tommy doesn’t realize he is hyperventilating until Callahan asks, “*Are you okay?*”

“I’ll be fine,” he inhales sharply. *In and out, calm down*, Tommy hears in Phil’s voice. In Techno’s voice. In voices of people he knows yet doesn’t remember.

“*You don’t look fine.*”

Tommy shakes his head, “Just tell me... Dream can’t get me from the prison, can he? He doesn’t have any admin privileges left that could possibly help him to escape?”

“None,” Callahan confirms. “*The only valuable thing he has is the Revivebook, but it’s useless now. I took care of it.*”

The admin offers him a hand. Tommy throws a look at Callahan through his own fingers gripping at the base of his hair. The admin looms over him both in height and width. Tommy would have found that insulting before, but now there is something reassuring about the giant shadow Callahan’s figure casts.

It’s not that he looks like a fighting type of player. Quite the opposite, skittishness reads in the way he shifts weight and flicks his long ears to every mere shuffle in the long grass. At the same time, there is a certain mysteriousness radiating off the admin, power of a source that Tommy can’t see but which makes air around them buzz with energy. It circles him. Protective. Reassuring.

Tommy has a severe lack of adults he can trust on this server, but one more name might have been just added to that list.

Tommy takes Callahan’s hand.

First hints of a dawn prickle at the horizon. Tommy knows, in a way that he can’t quite explain, that this is his last time visiting the field. Flowers will fade, the winds will go still, and the rising sun will mark the moment he’ll finally be alive *and* free.

"Thank you," Tommy says. "For bringing me back, and everything after that."

Callahan nods. Tommy takes a couple of steps forward, flexes his wings in preparation for flight. Before he takes off the ground, however, he turns to admin with a determined expression on his face.

"I have one last favor to ask you for," Tommy says.

In the box of things that Sam left him in his suite, Tommy finds a new calendar. He flips through the pages until he finds April, and marks down the number twenty-nine as today's date.

It's been almost a month since Tommy was turned back human. Two and a half weeks since he made his official return to the server.

His suite, located on the top floor of the Big Innit hotel, looks a lot different now. There is a table pressed against a wall, currently buried under a mess of papers Tommy has yet to go through and sign – the business agreement with Las Nevadas is coming along quite fine but *fuck* does he hate filling in the official stuff. All the other furniture in the room was brought in here by Sam; he also reconstructed the balcony so that it would be a lot more comfortable for Tommy to take off and land from.

Sam was one of the first people to visit Tommy after the news of his return spread.

You let me die, and similar accusations that have been weighing down Tommy's thoughts for the past days all dissipated at the sight of Sam's pained expression, of the way he clearly hesitated to come any closer despite heavily wanting it.

Tommy's awkward smile and unsure step forward were all encouragement Sam needed, because next thing he knew, he was encased into a gentle, careful hug. Say anything you want about creeper hybrids, but with Sam's soft fur and broad figure, he is one of the best people to hug around the server.

And Tommy would *know*. It was easier to list people who he did *not* hug around the server than those he did. The bird instincts demanded contact and affection and a lot of bloody sacrifices. Apparently, the SMP has put up a grave for Tommy. It was not a pleasant thing to stumble upon. Tubbo suggested they rig it with TNT and blow it up, but Tommy had a better idea: he pulled out a marker and corrected the engravings a bit, so now the gravestone marking his imaginary dead body says, *'RIP TommyInnit's pride. Murdered by bird brain.'*

Nobody questions Tommy anymore when he starts trailing somebody like a lost duckling, his ears burning like the Nether itself and gaze trained on the ground. He looks like a fucking *traffic light* when the targets of his bird brain wordlessly pull him into a hug, trying to hide their laughter.

"Please end my suffering," he asks, burying his face into the person's shoulder between the traitorous, happy caws.

He receives a sympathetic pat on his back, or an amused chuckle, sometimes a random gift that he stashes away carefully into his nest. People quickly figured out his newfound adoration towards shiny things, and at this rate Tommy's collection of gold trinkets might rival that of Techno's. Phil told him not to tell Techno, though.

"Why?" Tommy asked.

"Skyblock's Great Potato War," Phil replied. He looked around warily, as if expecting Techno to materialize from thin air. "That's one damn good example why nobody should ever get competitive with Techno."

Tommy does not remember what a Great Potato War is, and at this point, he is too afraid to ask.

A bell ringing at the hotel's reception brings him out of his thoughts. Tommy strides over to the ladder and climbs down, but Jack has already beat him to it.

"Welcome to the Big Innit-Manifold hotel," Tommy hears him say. "How can I help you today?"

Ah, right. The new hotel name is, frankly, shit, but Tommy had to go for a few sacrifices for the sake of their partnership. The story of his and Jack's reconciliation was straight out of a fever dream. Tommy feels ridiculous *thinking* about it.

For one, they still didn't fix the broken glass wall on the fourth floor from Jack's latest defenestration.

For two, not only the court that had to decide who took over the hotel ended up with Tommy and Jack Manifold being co-owners, but Tommy somehow got officially *adopted* along the way.

...Yeah. Don't even ask him about that one.

Tommy jumps off the ladder. Jack gives him an acknowledging punch to the shoulder with his left arm that isn't, contrasting to his right one, in a cast. The guest at the reception turns out to be Puffy. Her eyes turn warm and fond when she sees Tommy.

"I'd like to book a suite for a couple nights. Someone blew up my house as a prank," Puffy throws a pointed glance at Tommy, "and now I need somewhere to stay until I fix it."

Tommy grins sheepishly. "That would be twenty diamonds," he says.

Puffy rolls her eyes. "That whole capitalism thing really got to you, didn't it?"

"You should really start charging him for your therapy appointments," Jack says.

"Hey! She doesn't charge you, either!" he snarls without any real heat about it.

"For our group sessions, no, but the individual ones I pay full price," Jack dodges the smack of Tommy's wing. "Unlike someone, I appreciate other people's work."

"Okay, ten diamonds, but only this time," Tommy agrees, accepting the gems from Puffy. "I have a business to keep afloat, you know, can't be giving out stuff for free."

"Thank you," Puffy nods. "By the way, there are a lot of crows gathered outside. Do you happen to know what that could be about?"

Tommy glances at the clock standing on the desk and his hands fly to his hair. "Shit! I'm running late!"

"I've got you, big man," Jack says. He grabs a bag laying under the counter and tosses it to Tommy. "I'll show our guest to her room and manage the hotel till the rest of the day."

Tommy catches it mid-flight and pulls his wings through the slings as he sprints for the entrance. Jack really can be a good guy, when he's not being a bitch. "Thank you!" he yells, throwing the glass door open, "See you tomorrow!"

Outside, Chat is waiting for him. It's at least fifty of Phil's crows on the Prime Path getting into play-fights out of boredom. At the first sight of Tommy, they all perk up and let out their unsynchronized greetings. Tommy answers right back and gets an accusing peck from Bitch right after she lands on his shoulder.

"I know, I know," Tommy says. "I got distracted. We have one more place I need to visit, and then we're good to go."

With three flaps, Tommy takes off into the skies.

A few weeks ago, Tubbo and Ranboo brought Tommy to Snowchester to officially introduce him to Michael.

“*Small!*” the boy chirped upon their meeting, clasping his hands and smiling.

“No, no, I’m the biggest man alive,” Tommy corrected, crouching down in front of Michael. Ranboo and Tubbo watched them, probably confused, but Tommy’s whole attention was on the recognition in the child’s eyes.

Michael unceremoniously reached to the feathers growing at the side of Tommy’s head, near his ear, and brushed them carefully. “*Tiny!*”

And that’s the story of how Tommy ended up getting a Piglin nickname from his nephew.

Michael is fluent in his native language despite being away from his home Nether, and is getting quite good at Endermen’s vwoorps, too, but his English still needs a lot of improvement.

Since neither Tubbo or Ranboo speak Piglin, Tommy had acted like a translator to help them understand Michael’s bubbles and, without noticing it himself, had turned into a part-time babysitter. Tubbo even gifted Tommy a small ‘#1 Uncle’ pin just to mock him.

Jokes on Tubbo, now Tommy refuses to take it off.

Michael opens the door of his balcony on the second knock. Tommy walks in, folding his wings to fit into the frame, and grins at him.

“Big M!” he throws his arms to the sides.

“*Tiny!*” Michael happily snorts back. Tommy shakes his head at him, trying to hide his smile.

“No, no, that’s not the way to properly greet a person,” he says. “Remember what I taught you yesterday?”

“Fuck you,” Michael says, with a strong accent. He creases his brows in concentration, trying hard to remember something, and then beams, yelling, “Bitch!”

Tommy ruffles his head encouragingly. “You’re growing up so fast,” he says, wiping away a non-existent tear. “Alright, Big M, are you ready for a trip?”

Michael nods, grabbing his winter coat. Tommy helps him to put it on. Michael then makes grabby hands at him, so Tommy scoops the toddler up and secures him in his arms.

The trapdoor leading to Michael’s room opens, and Ranboo peeks in, probably attracted by the sound of voices. This or his good parent senses have been set off by the fact that Tommy teaches his child to swear. Either way, instead of finding Michael peacefully playing with his toys, he sees him happily waving his hand as Tommy dives off the edge of the balcony railings.

He spreads his wings a moment before they were supposed to hit the ground. Michael sneezes when a handful of snow flies into his face, and Tommy laughs at the way he wrenches his nose. Ranboo almost throws himself off the balcony with a distressed vwoorp, only to get cooled off by a blow off air a powerful flap of Tommy’s wings.

“I’ll see you at the Arctic commune!” Tommy yells.

The journey is short and peaceful.

Despite what other people could think, Tommy is a very responsible uncle. With Michael in his arms, he doesn’t go for usual twists and dives he likes to practice in the air. Well. Anymore. Precisely, ever since Tubbo had caught Tommy doing a full backwards loop and threatened to chop his head off if something happens to Michael.

Tommy’s current flight speed is way faster than it used to be – since, you know, he isn’t a flying toothpick anymore – so they make it to the Arctic commune almost at the same time as Ranboo. He throws his wings wider, slowing down in a glide, and lands in the snow, stumbling a few steps forward for balance.

“Tommy, you’re going to give me a heart attack,” Ranboo says, snatching Michael from his arms.

“If you didn’t want me abducting your child in broad daylight, you shouldn’t have installed a landing pad for me at your house,” Tommy counters right back.

Ranboo sighs. Tommy pats his shoulder with a grin. There is a table set outside in the snow, with chairs all around it. Techno casts him a glance from where he was setting down plates around it, “Tommy. What’s with you and getting hypothermia around my house?”

Tommy looks down at himself, shivering in a thin red-and-white shirt. The holes on the back are great for his wings but they come with the disadvantage of an unwanted ventilation system. “I’ve actually come prepared this time.”

He takes off the bag Jack tossed him earlier, and pulls out a long blue coat.

“Finally,” Techno grumps, “you’re going to stop stealing my capes.”

And immediately, the coat is tossed aside, and Tommy grabs at Techno’s current blue cape. Loosely thrown over his shoulders, it slides into his awaiting arms faster than Techno can stop it. “Don’t mind if I do!”

“Give that back,” Techno snarls.

Tommy wraps the cape around himself further. “No, I don’t think I will.”

Techno tries to grab him, and Tommy dodges. Meanwhile, Niki approaches the table, a large box in her hands. Tommy jumps behind her back, hiding from angrily huffing Techno.

“Niki,” he whines, “Techno’s trying to steal my cape!”

“It’s literally *my* cape,” Techno breathes out.

“Techno’s a thief! He is a thief *and* a liar.”

Niki chuckles, looking between overdramatically shivering Tommy and Techno crossing his arms. “Well, I don’t know whose cape is that, but I brought us a cake!”

He sets the box on the table. Techno throws one last glance at victorious Tommy and grabs a knife to cut the cake with.

“I had someone to help me with decorating this time,” Niki says with a cheesy smile on her face. She opens the box. A funky-looking picture of a crow stares back at them above a bold red word, *‘BITCH.’*

“I wonder who that could be,” Techno huffs.

Tommy grins at him. “Where is Phil?”

Instead of an answer, Techno points his finger up. As if on command, a large shadow casts over them. Ranboo yelps in surprise when Phil’s giant wings cut through the air, his feathers almost touching the top of Tommy’s head. A few napkins get blown away from the table when he flaps his wings, rapidly gaining height, much to Techno’s annoyance.

“PHIL!” he yells. “I have put so much work into folding them!”

He looks angry, but it doesn’t slide past Tommy the way his face seems to beam up at the sight of Phil soaring through the air.

Tommy tries to hide his own smile, too. That’s what he asked Callahan a favor for – the miraculous healing of Phil’s wings was not without the admin’s help. Tommy didn’t want either Phil or Techno starting on that favor for a favor shit and all, so he kept silent about his own interference. He helped because he wanted to. And also because he needed a flight teacher who could, you know, actually *fly*.

Speaking of that.

Techno whips around when Tommy throws the cape back onto his shoulders. A knowing look passes his face when he sees the avian flexing his wings.

“Five minutes,” he says. “Don’t make others wait for you again.”

“Of course,” Tommy says, already knowing that, in five minutes, nothing will be able to pull him off the skies.

The moment the ground under him is gone, and he is surrounded with nothing but air, his body shifts, like a gear clicking by to its place. It always surprises him how natural it feels: as if he always had his wings, and now, without the invisible barrier pushing them down, they spread wide and free.

For a moment, he falls. And then wind flows wild, both desperate and happy, under Tommy’s wings, and pushes him up and up and *up*.

Everything happens in a matter of seconds, and next thing Tommy knows, he is breaking through the clouds and bathing in the afternoon sun. The satisfaction melts his face into a relaxed smile.

Any other time, Tommy would be annoyed or embarrassed by the high-pitched chirps escaping his throat. Right now, though, he is less of a human and more of a bird: no thoughts, no emotions, only instincts.

Phil’s silhouette is darkening above. Tommy flaps faster, and catches up to him. The tips of their wings touch before they part again, almost synchronized in their movements.

Flock, Tommy’s mind hums. *Home*.

“I bet you can’t beat me to the Nether portal, old chicken!” Tommy yells through the wind blowing in their faces.

Phil’s wheezes at the insult. “You little shit!” he yelps. And then he dives.

When Tommy first relearned flight as an avian, he was afraid of folding his wings in flight. The feeling of air knocked out of his lungs and the ground beneath blurring down to vague shapes and colors made him panic and leap out of it too early.

Tommy isn't afraid of flight anymore, because he knows, when he catches a wind too strong to handle, when strength leaves his wings, when the sky feels like it's crashing on him - there will always be someone to break his fall.

Fundy doesn’t like the new admin.

There is something weird about him, almost cryptid, he’d say. Without hearing and senses like his own, nobody else notices Callahan observing them from far away, but Fundy does, and it makes his skin crawl. There is nothing necessarily bad about him, well, looking at people, if it wasn’t for the musing expression he always bores. It makes Fundy feel like Callahan has some kind of a plan in his mind that he doesn’t think he’ll like.

Even now, stumbling through the ruins of L’manburg, Fundy catches a sight of deer antlers flashing behind a half-destroyed house. If it wasn’t for the fact that Callahan is seemingly heading in the opposite direction to him, he’d go home immediately. Throw his tools into the closet, have a dinner and then go peacefully to *sleep* –

Well. Everything but the last one. The reason why Fundy often finds himself around L’manburg these days is his insomnia. Stupid dreams bring up old memories he’d rather not look too deep into – especially the ones that have Wilbur in them.

Fundy’s trail of thoughts involuntarily brings him to the altar Phil tried to bring Wilbur back with. He sighs and is just about to spin around and leave when he hears a sound of something wet smacking stone.

Uh. Where did this fish come from?

A salmon is flopping up and down a few feet away from Fundy. His eyes fall on a tiny pool of water in the middle of the altar. He remembers Phil bringing a pseudo-Sally there in hopes of helping in bringing Wilbur back to life, but he is also pretty sure that Ghostbur ate that fish. Raw. While it was alive.

...It was quite a traumatizing experience for Fundy.

He jumps up the struggling salmon and picks it up carefully. The salmon is opening and closing its mouth as it gasps for air. Fundy drops it into the pool of water, and it comes back to its senses, circling around in the tight space.

It looks a little bit odd for a salmon. Instead of normal yellowish eyes, these ones are a dark brown. Pink and red scales have a line of white running down them. Is this just a discoloration anomaly? Or is this fish sick?

The fish slashes him with water and swims faster. If fish could panic, this one certainly was. Fundy shifts on his heels. The salmon would most certainly die if he just left it here, from suffocation or hunger, but if he just brings it over to the sea and releases it there, it will probably get eaten by a bigger fish right away. Especially if he's right about the white scales and the salmon is actually sick.

It's no secret that Fundy has a soft spot for fish. For, er, understandable reasons. Fundy doesn't even eat the fish he catches; only releases them back into the ocean. An empty bucket from his inventory is just the right size to fit fish and some water for it. That will do. At least until Fundy finds an aquarium to put it in.

As Fundy carries the bucket, he finds, multiple times, the salmon intensely staring at him. There is something too conscious about it in contrast to usually empty fish eyes. It makes him pause in his step, look closer.

Fundy's ears flick at the sound of a hoof hitting the ground. All doubts he has disappear on their own.

Fundy brings the fish home, unaware of the smirking admin watching him from a distance.

Chapter End Notes

Callahan: it was a glitch, I said, you know, like a liar

I can't believe this is actually happening but GUYS crowfic have come to an end!

If you ever thought of commenting on this work this the perfect time to do so. Tell me what you think, what your favorite moments were, quote some parts if you want, art is very encouraged, too!

If you are not afraid of your friends judging you for your choice of fanfiction you can recommend it to them too XD

THE CROWINNIT CONTENT IS NOT OVER YET

I will not write a separate fic for Salmonbur, but I am planning on THREE (bittersweet, sad and open) alternative endings for this story + one or two oneshots about the things that happen after Tommy's return to the server. Particularly on how Tommy and Jack attended the court and Tommy somehow ended up getting adopted :D

If you want to read any of that, be sure to subscribe to the "Crowinnit" series right now! For early updates and snippets you can join my discord server linked below.

End Notes

We have a [discord server now!](#)

Join to share your fanart, thoughts, theories, bounce ideas and get sneak-peeks for future chapters or just chat with me and Mellodi ;)

If you saw any typos or grammatical mistakes please tell me in the comments.

The initial idea was partially inspired by amazing SilverWing's fic '[The Lone Wolf And The Hermit](#)' and sat for a while in my [prompts book \(contains spoilers!\)](#) until I finally decided to proceed with it, so some elements are taken from other people's comments and suggestions.

ALL THE FANART FOR THE FIC IS HERE

By Maltose:

[Chapter 9 gold-stealing birb](#)

[Chapter 9 escape](#)

[Chapter 10 wings](#)

By FantaFurious:

[Tommy's struggles as a crow by FantaFurious](#)

[Chapter 8 scenes](#)

[Crow!Tommy and his dead human body](#)

By lei_Irj:

[Philza and Tommy hug](#)

By Bittersweet:

[Tiny crow Tommy](#)

By kK tHe bAe:

[Tommy and Chat](#)

By legallylibra

[Chapter 5](#)

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!